WHO SHALL COMMAND THY HEART?

A STARLIGHT TALE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THOMAS HALL SHASTID

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

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WHO SHALL COMMAND THY HEART?

A Starlight Tale

Books by THOMAS HALL SHASTID

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WHO SHALL COMMAND THY HEART?

A Starlight Tale

by

THOMAS HALL SHASTID, M. D., LL. B., Sc. D., etc.

"Who are the gents that collect the rents
At the end of each four weeks?
The Argentines and the Portuguese and the Greeks."
—*Popular song by Swanstrom.*

"Here is the gold:
All this I give you. Let me be your servant."
—Adam, in *As You Like It.* Act II, Scene iii.

"No man can serve two masters."—*Jesus.*

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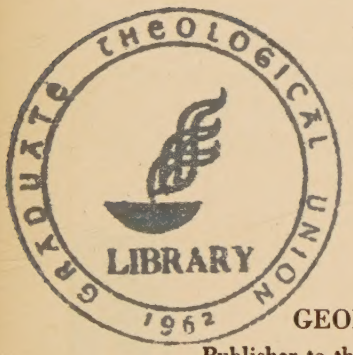

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February 16, 1924.

MRS. DONALD R. HUSBAND,
Eugene, Oregon.

Dear Helen:

Three and twenty years ago today—though it does not seem nearly so long—my little girl, Louisa Minerva (the only child that I ever have had) both was born and also went away forever. On that same day, you too came on earth, and here remained. A little later, we (that is, I and my most excellent wife, whom you now call "Mother") came to know you, and, learning when your birthday was, began to term you "Daughter" in the place of her who had died. Loving you at first for the sake of her we had known and lost, we later came to love you for your own sweet self—loving the other not one whit less on your account, but infinitely more, because of the new, sweet lessons in the lore of loving which you had taught us. Will not you, therefore, who, to "Mother" and me, are thus dear in a twofold sense, please to accept this little volume as a slight token of the affection which we bear you and also as a modest tribute to your very great worth?

Your adoptive "Daddy,"
T. H. S.

20795

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Who Shall Command Thy Heart?

A Starlight Tale

CHAPTER I

Meet Mr. Peter Samuels

The time—nineteen long centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ: nineteen hundred long, developmental yet somewhat disappointing, years, and something over. The place—State House Square, there in the center of Starlight: Starlight, too, fairest of all the cities in the wide valley of the Starlight, and the very head and heart of the whole great Starlight commonwealth. Early summer evening, still light. Crowds and still more crowds, filling State House Square.

Peter N. Samuels was just emerging from his bank. That was the greatest and most wonderful of all the banks in the incredible wall of stone and steel standing like a rampart round about State House Square. In the center of the Square the citadel, or law factory.

Peter N. Samuels, as he left the bank, turned, and, to a person who lingered within the portals, said: "Good night, Mr. Toplofty. Let all be invested to the greatest advantage." Mr. Toplofty replied, "Good night, Mr. Samuels. We shall certainly do the thing that will be expected."

The door shut, locked. Peter faced the crowds again. Though a large man and plainly full of life and energy, he did not at once set out on a voyage through that human sea. Truth is, Peter Samuels loved Starlight, loved to feast his eyes on Starlight. And chiefly he loved State House Square, whereinto the most of the important passages of the city debouched; as, Dollar Avenue, Bond Street, Cash Lane, Pleasure Boulevard, etc. He stood and watched the rushing multitudes: not merely Americans, both black and white, but also Germans and Scandinavians, Italians, Slavs, Bulgars, Rumanians, Austrians, Magyars, etc.: both the ground and the unground grist of the American mill. Ho! what a mixture of grain! And what was yet, in the course of the ages, to come forth out of the grinding?

There was not a furrow between Peter's dark eyes. One hand held and idly flipped the leaves of a gilt-edged hymn book. The other, deep in the left hand pocket of his neatly creased trousers, was gently jingling a considerable quantity of what appeared to be heavy and solid disks of some responsive kind of metal. He whispered, as if to himself: "Let all be invested to the greatest advantage." Then, as he started up street, he began, by a sudden impulse, singing, out loud, there before everybody:

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Afric's sunny fountains—"

He had done this before, and it had never hurt him: advertised him rather. Besides, he did not care very much for his, for anybody's, dignity.

He recalled the time, six years ago, when he had walked all round State House Square with a long red rider on his back, reading: "Dollars Wanted at the Samuels Bank." He had been the cynosure of thousands of laughing eyes. And the papers, how they had featured it all—free! People still talked of the time when Pete's chief rival, big Bill Burley, of the Starlight Second National, had been supposed to have played this joke on Peter Samuels. But Peter recalled very plainly how he himself had, on that day, in the State House basement, pinned that streamer to his own big back.

"From Greenland's icy mountains, From India's coral strand!" So he kept singing in the rich sweet tenor which had brought so many people to the Samuels church—there to hear him both as he sang and as he preached. He turned and looked back at the front of the great bank—"façade" Toplofty called it. To turn and look back at that bank and to recall that it was largely Peter N. Samuels' bank, was to experience a feeling of uplift almost spiritual in its permanency and fineness.

"Hi, Peter!" "Hello, Jeff!" "Hey, Peter!" "Howr'ye coming, Dave?" All Starlight knew Peter. Peter looked forward, backward, sideways; called backward, forward, sideways; smiled backward, sideways, forward. Never at a loss to know a face, to call a name. Full of affection was almost

everybody for this man who never failed to know an old acquaintance or a new one, and who, too big to care who liked it or who lumped it, went flipping and flapping and jingling and singing his cheery, care-free way all along the sunny side of State House—

"Bang!" Peter was suddenly stopped in his progress.

At first he knew not what had happened. Then he saw—big Bill Burley! His old-time competitor, Bill, had, in fact, played him an ancient joke—not much of a joke to begin with, and now so trite and commonplace that it was left, for the most part, in the hands of half-witted country bumpkins. Burley, that is to say, had quickly walked in front of Peter, and then, suddenly stopping and bowing his head a trifle, had risen on the tips of his great, square toes, and so had caught the friendly face of Peter with a rude impact on his own great, broad, rock-solid back.

Now Peter's first impulse was to wreck this man at once, wreck him thoroughly and forevermore. The hot blood surged to his face, surged back into his heart. Then the golden answer, "My fault, William. I ought to have been looking."

But Burley: "I will have my dues. Damn you, you beat me at everything. I will have my dues."

Burley went and stood a little way up street, by the side of a man as red-headed and square-shaped as himself—Grounch, the prosecuting attorney of Starlight County. A great friend of Burley's was this prosecutor, Grounch; owed his position, in fact,

to Burley; and, furthermore, moreover, and notwithstanding, was a born prosecutor and persecutor, if any such being has ever existed in all the dark annals of recorded time.

As Peter came up even with the two men, Burley said again to him: "I will have my dues." Grounch, too, looked at him, and, snarling like a surly dog, ground out: "Transgressors must pay."

But, at this, a vast roaring sound, which, some seconds before, had attracted Peter's attention and then lost it, increased to such a volume and intensity that the man was quickly and wholly absorbed in a vain attempt to account for its origin. Whence came that remarkable outburst of volcanic and rapidly increasing turmoil? All at once, the explanation, in physical form, came rushing and roaring and bellowing out of Dollar Avenue straight into astonished State House Square. A mob. And such a mob! Hectic moment even for State House Square in Starlight! All traffic was impeded: street cars, motor busses, everything. Stopped, everything absolutely stopped. The mob was one great block of human beings, impassable as Gibraltar.

It surged across the wide paving and into State House Yard itself. There it centered about a telephone pole, with a good strong cross-tree placed high enough, yet not too high, upon it.

Hundreds in the outskirts of the crowd raised themselves on highest tiptoes, straining to see. Peter saw flatfooted. There, in the wild center and storming vortex of it all—old Eph Morrison. Why,

poor old Eph! Helpless old colored man, who, had he done any wrong, would have been railroaded to the penitentiary by any court in Christendom! No chance, then, for any miscarriage of justice, and yet—this mob.

A detail of policemen, forming a solid wedge not far from Peter, bucked like a cannon ball into the seething mass. One officer went down at the first bolt, and was carried away moaning. All the rest, in about ten seconds, had been ejected from the multitude sans clubs, sans guns, sans coats and hats, sans teeth, sans hair, sans almost everything. That ended the interference of the police. Majorities are right, and the mob was clearly in the majority.

Peter's attention was once again attracted to the center of the loud maelstrom. Some one was just placing a noose about Ephraim's neck. Some one? Dirt and dollars—it was Monty Muggins.

Now Monty Muggins was the only son and offspring of Secretary of State Muggins, who sat entrenched in power over there in the State Building itself. Inclined too toward friendship with a certain Peter Samuels was this Secretary. Monty Muggins, black sheep and white elephant combined! Big, fat, worthless, lazy slob, professional chance-taker, criminal! This is the way in which Peter had come to know Monty. Long years gone by, Peter had had twelve months in a school of missions, but later had gone into banking. Even yet he remitted, from time to time and directly (after the suspicious manner of bankers everywhere) considerable sums to mis-

sionaries in various portions of the world. On a time, seeking to make a man of Monty, and chiefly for his father's sake, he had tried to interest the son in foreign missions. Had got him, in fact, into the Sunday School. Had got him also to teaching in that institution. Had got him, later, to learn Comafran, that simple, if almost universal, language of equatorial Africa, with a view to his departure some time as an African missionary. Monty of course had backed out, later, out, out of all the good things into which his friend and teacher, Peter Samuels, had so carefully enticed him. Now—this! All at once Ephraim turned his two poor, pitiful eyes toward the heavens. "God! wilt thou not help me?"

Peter put out his hands and went to the center of the crowd as another man would reach for a chew of tobacco. In his heart he was saying, "Let me be thy agent, Lord, to assist this good old man."

Not a gun was fired, not a hand lifted. Perhaps each man knew that if some one tried to "start something," some one else would do some starting. It is much likelier, though, that each one thought: "Let's see what Peter Samuels 'll do." Always a kind of crazy curiosity in Starlight as to what Pete Samuels would do next.

Peter, as he reached the center of proceedings, said, in that rich voice which had all the notes, all the stops, the voice which was not unworthy to speak the great words of Christ himself, and which had often spoken them before multitudes, said Peter (a joyously laughing Peter): "Not to interfere with

ceremonies, gentlemen, have I footballed in. Only to pay a thousand dollars which I owe Uncle Ephraim. Pulled me out of Starlight River, just one day last week, did Ephraim. Vanished then, and this is the first I've got to see of him. Want to pay now, before I can't. A long journey, gentlemen; a long journey. No coming back. Hence—Ephraim." He began to write in his check book.

"Hell's wheels!" shouted some one. "Thousand dollars to a man goin' to die!" murmured another. Then a perfect volley: "Pay him, Pete. Pay him! He can bribe the devil then, to let him out o' hell." "No he can't," shouted an individual. "Devil's got too much money now." And so forth and so on—inane laughter at inane jests. Monty Muggins writhed. "Get out o' the way there, Peter Samuels. To hell with you."

"Let Pete alone! let him alone!" cried the multitude, tickled at the idea of a man who was just about to die receiving a gift of a thousand dollars which he could never make use of.

Not a word from Peter as to letting the man off. Not one word on the subject.

At length, Peter to Ephraim: "Here's your thousand. Buy some ice-water with it." Laughter. "Gentlemen, I am very much obliged to you, and—" Peter took from the left hand trousers pocket one of those metallic disks which he had been clinking and clanking together so joyously ever since he had left the bank, *his* bank. And, holding the coin aloft

for a moment or two, and turning slowly to the various points of the compass in order that all might clearly perceive that the disk was really a double eagle, a twenty-dollar gold piece, he went on with his sentence. "Gentlemen, I am very much obliged to you, and to show you that I, although a banker, can be grateful, and that in fact I really am grateful indeed, because of the opportunity which you have just now given me, just now afforded me, to pay my debt, I will proceed to distribute—" He flung the coin high in air. All eyes followed carefully. Watched carefully where the coin fell. Went after the coin with a wild and rollicking rush.

Another coin he flung.

Yet another.

Then another still.

Each time farther and farther from the center of operations—the very spot where he stood, with the negro shivering beside him, and Muggins cursing vainly with uplifted hands.

Presto—the police! Peter had begun to wonder if they ever would see their opportunity. He kept flinging for a moment more. Eph was in safety now. Muggins shook his bloody fist, and breathed dire threatenings against Peter Samuels. No use. Peter had won. He had used "psychology," had changed the spirit of the multitude. One of the police, a new man in Starlight who enjoyed not, as yet, the acquaintance of Peter Samuels, came up to that victorious personage, and said: "Get on, now, get on. We've had enough of this."

"All right," laughed Peter Samuels. And he slapped the policeman on the back and looked down into his eyes with such sweet shining friendliness that the officer at once became his friend for life. Peter was just like that, always having his way with folks, always changing people somehow. A leader. You don't often see them.

On the outskirts of the crowd Peter again noticed both Burley and Grounch. What a fierce man was Grounch! a prosecutor by the blood! A fighter who loved the sheer brutalities of fighting. There, at the mob's edge, he had stuck, gloating, no doubt, not so much over the prospective lynching as over all the prospective cases that this day's work might eventually bring forth, and in which he, the said Grounch, could take high part and joyous. Peter spoke them both good words again. They did not reply, but other people, thinking the words were meant for themselves, replied readily in their steads.

Even as Peter passed on out of State House Square and into Cash Lane, he took his sweet influence with him. "Hi, Pete!" "Some day's work, Peter!" Everywhere the influence.

People loved to watch that finely developed form, tall and graceful in its every movement. Then—the face of surpassing beauty: the lofty brow, the Greek nose, the marble skin, the night-black hair and eyes. In those eyes a strange light shining and a friendly—let us say, almost divine. People who saw that light wondered and became acquainted with its bearer at once, recognizing in the light a quality

they long had sought. It was chiefly the eyes that made people keep looking at Peter Samuels.

"Saw it all, Peter." This from an automobile.

Peter suddenly dropped his hymn book. Out popped Dr. Straight, picked the hymn book up, and handed it to Peter, the other hand lifted—almost to his very hat-brim. People were like that, somehow, Peter around.

"How're you feeling, Doctor?"

"Like a firecracker on the Fourth of July—all shot to pieces."

"You ought to see some doctor."

Straight gave a sardonic laugh.

"O I mean a *good* doctor," said Peter.

"You, at all events, have a most excellent one," countered Straight. "Where's your automobile?"

"Repairs."

"Good. *Keep* walking. Peter, who's that man you're looking at?"

"Tish, Burley's cashier."

"Burley and—"

"O yes, Burley and Grounch. Watch 'em, Peter. They're going into Grounch's office."

"Mischief."

"Yes.—Peter, a word. Ought to lose that automobile permanently. You know your weakness, weakness of Americans. No exercise—get flabby. You used to knock 'em out nightly at the club: now I see you there no longer. You just ride and ride, and work and work. Know what'll happen? Hardening of the arteries. And then—"

"O I know all that story. Let me off tonight, Doctor."

"Promise me, then—promise yourself—exercise."

"To make *you* happy," said Peter.

"And then less work, very much less of it."

"Not that, not even to please you—or Patricia."

"To please God, then—*your* God, I mean."

Peter looked down for a long time. "*My* God!" The church bells all about the city began to ring with a strange poignant appeal. It was Wednesday night.

"Prayer meeting?" asked the doctor.

Peter nodded. "Can't go, though. Meant to, and took this new hymn book to the bank. But Patricia is coming in tonight, and I've just learned that her train's very late. I have to meet her, of course. So it always is when you're married." He feigned a great dissatisfaction, and his bachelor friend smiled.

Then Straight, still listening to the bells, began to tell Peter he had just been reading Coe's "Psychology of Religion," and had been thereby very deeply impressed. He also longed to tell him how very, very much more he had been impressed and influenced by the sweet religious life of him, Peter Samuels. But to that he could not quite bring himself.

As he kept on speaking of Coe, up comes a man from "Dagotown," otherwise called "the slums of Starlight."

"Why, hello, Tony!" So Peter, first. Then the doctor. Peter, somehow, was always first.

"De little girl, de Bambina. She verra seek I tink, Doctor." He could speak no more.

Into the auto, then, the doctor hustled Tony, and Peter kept on walking down Cash Lane, and so into Dollar Avenue—that great thoroughfare upon which stood all the most important and expensive churches of the city—as it were an ecclesiastical segregated district.

CHAPTER II

God in All

Straight went first to a flower shop. "Do you think Bambina will like this?" He picked out a big, fresh bunch of roses from a long line of jars. Then to a toy and candy shop, where he bought things for the four other children. "You call her Bambina [baby], but she's your oldest, Antonio?" "Yes, buta—she my first babe." "I understand. She'll always be a baby to you. Six years old now, isn't she, Tony?"

"Fiva year and half." That was all, but his eyes were shining. After a little, "Doctor, I not lika lose *any*."

"You won't lose her, Tony." The doctor had seen Tony before, and knew his emotional temperament.

They drove into the slums, all about them thick crowds of the outcast "Argentines, Portuguese, and Greeks." The doctor spoke to many, shook hands with some he knew the best. Then up the long, long stairs to Tony's "home"—one small room, with a single tiny window. From the day when Tony's first "bambina" had come into the world, even until now, six weeks after his good wife had died in her fifth childbirth, Dr. Straight had come at Tony's every beckoning—mostly, it is true, to the hospital, where things were cleaner and more convenient, but

often here also, especially when some one had just become sick.

A neighbor woman held in her arms Bambina. The other little ones, unkempt and even dirty, cried (some even crawled) peevishly about. A glance at Bambina, and the doctor had the sick child in his own arms. How he worked, the great, strong, doctor, to keep the breath going in the tiny frame.

But to no purpose.

Tony saw that a desperate struggle was going on. "You save, Doctor? You save?"

But the doctor only held Bambina still more tightly, not replying to Tony at all. And, strange to say (as many another atheist has done) he prayed. Said he, "Dear God, save Bambina."

At length the doctor laid his little burden down, there on the foul bed. Tony, for all his ready sympathy and insight, did not at first comprehend. Still he kept saying, "You save, Doctor, you save?"

Then as, at length, he comprehended, he followed the doctor to the door, ashen white, tearless, and, laying a rude hand on the doctor's shoulder, whispered: "I like you jesta same, Doctor." It was all that poor Tony could say or pay.

Meanwhile, Peter had been making his somewhat royal progress on down Dollar Avenue, that greatest passageway of Starlight.

The thoroughfares of the city had all been laid out with a singular purpose in view. The "streets," that is to say, ran east and west, the "avenues," at

right angles, while the "boulevards," spoke-fashion, radiated out from and back into the hub, or pivot, of the whole affair—the State House, or, as one could figuratively say, "The Law." It might appear to a stranger that the people of Starlight were accustomed, on all ordinary occasions, to travel (and, in fact, they did actually travel on all ordinary occasions) upon the square, but that, when pushed or pinched, they took some handy short cut to "The Law"—else away from it, as the case might require. All things in Starlight led, eventually, either to or from "The Law" (near by the Peter Samuels bank, too, as a matter of course). The Law, in a word, was the geometric middle and big-spider center of the great web which was Starlight.

But of all the passageways of the city the greatest, by far, was Dollar Avenue. First of all, it was an avenue, and, second, it was also a boulevard—boulevard and avenue (or street) necessarily combining in just two instances—one north and south, one east and west—to form a single thoroughfare of double size and perhaps quadruple importance. The other of these specially wide and extremely significant passages was Church Street. Church Street and Dollar Avenue theoretically crossed (where multitudes of other things happened theoretically) in the State House.

But the strangest thing of all about Dollar Avenue and Church Street was that neither of these thoroughfares ran straight. Straight enough when first laid out, they had somehow got twisted and double-

contorted and unexpectedly inosculated, at least in many places, so that, just at the present time, it was difficult to say exactly in what direction either passageway did really run. There was, for example, owing to these meanderings and serpentine convolutions, an actual second intersection of Church Street and Dollar Avenue—over across the river. On one of the corners at this second intersection stood "The Shanty" (as Peter himself was accustomed to refer to it) of Peter Samuels.

Just now, Peter, as he passed up Dollar Avenue, and so across the Starlight bridge, was thinking of the many changes which had occurred in Starlight, ever since the day when first he had come to the town. Over there on Church Street, for example, right at its greatest circumbendibus, once had stood most of the large churches of the city. Now they had all removed, very strangely, to Dollar Avenue—almost every one of them.

Take this very church, for instance, which, just now, he was passing—the Church of the Angels—by many nicknamed, in this later epoch, "The Church of the Financiers." Once it had stood—

Peter's eye was caught by the forms of two young negroes, who, in a shadowy angle of the building, with reverent bowed heads, drank in the sweet offering of sacred song. Of a sudden—

"Hey! Whatter y' mean by standing there where I've told you two to get on out of this?" A burly policeman was moving leisurely toward the negroes.

These, at first, stirred not, so enraptured were

they with the music, for music, to a negro, is the one golden stair upleading into heaven. God pity the negro's mind had it had no capacity for music.

One of the negroes murmured some or another deprecation which Peter could not catch.

Then: "That's all I want to hear out of either of you. What I want to say to you two so you'll understand a little better: it don't cut no ice how big you are when you start planning murders and inciting riots in this town, you've got me to talk to. While I'm on my job here, nobody has to call out any troops."

As the negroes slunk away, the policeman turned to Peter. "Good evening, Mr. Samuels. That was a fine job you did for Eph tonight. Hadn't had you for a friend, he'd been tasting sulphur this minute. Hey!" he cried after the departing negroes. "You got to talk loud to scare *me.*"

"Let's go play game o' craps," said one of the negroes in a plain voice.

The policeman passed on south toward State House Square, and Peter north. His heart was bruised for the negroes. These went into an obscure alley, and he did not follow them, but he sent after them a cheerful "Good night, gentlemen"—to which, however, they did not respond.

The bells were ringing again, ringing, ringing over all Starlight, and the sweet, sacred sounds filled up the soul of Peter Samuels with a strange, wild appeal. They seemed to cry, "Once more hear us! O hear us, Peter Samuels, thou that shouldst have

been a priest unto the Lord! Hear us once again or ere we die." When the nearer bells had ceased, even sweeter sounds came from a distant small steeple over in the deeps of Dagotown.

He at length reached his own big church, there at the second crossing of the two great ways of the city. Slowly he came to a pause, with bowed head.

Praying in the church—behind those softly-lighted, sacred windows—praying. Later—song. He felt himself trembling, and presently was seized by a passion so intense that he hurried across Church Street to the corner where stood his own house. This was a truly gigantic affair, set in the midst of spacious grounds. In the rear, were summer-house, tool-shed, garage, and so on. Also a little winding stream with pleasant dream voices in it, and two or three shady seats along its grassy banks. Here, in the front yard, was the great magnolia—his favorite tree of all that stood in the enclosure. How straight and clean, tall and majestic—one great flowered candlestick of shining bloom and pious incense! How he loved that tree!

The house was of brick, two stories and a half, with two-story wings and front-doors and side-doors—doors, doors everywhere. Peter liked doors, doors and windows. His inner and outer lives were in close communion with each other, and he loved the quick transition. And the most of the doors opened and the most of the windows looked into the garden—a riot of sweet colors, now in a haze of mid-summer heat. A pungent odor of arbor vitae filled

the air, but all around were roses and heliotropes too. There, for example, under Patricia's bay window, were roses and heliotropes. He recalled with a sweet pang that he himself, some years ago, had set out that rose-bush under Patty's window. She had just been saying, on that day, that roses were the symbol of human love, as heliotropes were of divine. So he had gone forthwith and selected the finest bush in the nurseries of Starlight, then transplanted it here with his own affectionate, if very strong, hands. Old Uncle Henry, the gardener, had stood near, wondering, wondering why Peter would not any wise receive assistance in this matter. Poor old Uncle Henry, there he was now, working late, head bobbing up and down among the currant bushes, also singing, singing. Uncle Henry did not care how late he worked for "Mahs Pete."

Up above was Peter's own bedroom—bigger than Pat's because it must contain many books, separate too because of Pete's foolish way of writing and even of reading away on into the night. There were language books there, works on philosophy too, also some on law, poetry, religion. Omnivorous reader. Never had been to any but that missionary college, but knew the Gospel according to St. John by heart and in Greek—a foretype, as it might be, of many an American business man who is yet to come. Strange admixture, this Peter Samuels, but then, like many another that is yet to be born in this great land of ours, he was a curious blending of many bloods: some cool and steady, others vivid and

hot, some material and some spiritual. He knew these things about himself, too; was very sharply and clearly conscious of them.

He passed a little farther along by the side of his home. Little dusty yellow flowers gazed up at him, giving the look which all flowers have for those who love the Lord of flowers. He paused again. The leaves lisped in the currant bushes, trying to say things about God. The soft, perfumed evening seemed in fact to be mad with the thought of God. And Peter saw again that far-gone night in his boyhood when, full of Christ's love, he went, silent and unaccompanied, to church, with his mind made up to give his heart and soul to Christ and to be Christ's only forevermore.

What wonderful days followed! He had left San Francisco (his parents being dead even then) without so much as the proverbial "shoestring." He had come on here to Starlight (where he had heard that the opportunities were much greater than in the farther West) and had worked his steady way through high school. Then a brief time of holy study at the missionary college. While still in the college, he had run a student's bookstore and bought and sold second-hand books, thus had made money so fast that he had become greatly enamored of that generally somewhat fascinating article, and believed himself predestined to a financial career. Then, one day, when he had incidentally gone out to a tiny village on a piece of the most commonplace business—Patricia. He did not just know how it all

had ever happened. Patricia, of course, was visiting in the place. He could not distinctly remember meeting her, and he had certainly never "proposed." Somehow, at some time, he had simply discovered that he had found her—as she him. They, later, were walking hand in hand, passed through the entire village without the least embarrassment to each other, just like old married folk, instinctively turned away from the big road and into a winding lane. Distant blue hills lay all ahead of them. On both sides, prosperous rolling country. Sometimes they passed fields of beautiful wild flowers. First thing they knew they were going back into the village again, without in the least having intended so to do. "It is just this way that life ends," Peter had told her.

Later, in Starlight, Patricia's father had blustered, talked "rich and poor" and similar objections. "Sir," said Peter Samuels, when at length he had got tired of this, "how much were you worth at my age? Don't dodge." The father, as Peter could see, had begun to like him. "*Your* age? A thousand." "Beat you," laughed Peter, handing out a bank book. Father-in-law-to-be read the little pages carefully, and at last was really exultant to find himself worsted. Peter noticed that too.

Then, married, Peter had gone into the bank—first, teller; then vice-president (passing over the head of Mr. Toplofty); soon was the true manager of the place. Patricia's father had then become an invalid. Wont to say, in that day, was father-in-

law, that Peter made the business grow so fast it made his head swim "more." He was not envious, only delighted. Peter saw that too. Then the grandchild—Patricia's father, thank God, had got to behold that wonder of his life. Then father-in-law died, and Peter became president of the First National Bank of Starlight. Next, the child died also. Peter never remembered much about that, having been in a sort of daze at the time, but he recalled very plainly that, one day, Patty shook his shoulders and said very sternly: "Peter, you've been sitting here ten days now, with your hand on the baby's cradle; and the doctor says 'Work.' "

Back to work then. And he had worked ever since. There had been no more children. O God, what a void! But he would think about that matter no longer.

He quietly shook himself as one that would cast aside a bitter-sweet dream. A spirit seemed to whisper in the grass. The roses swung their little censers, birds broke into holy hymns of sweet communion, there was a flutter and a pulsing in the bright sky. Almost he caught the glitter of eternal pinions. Time had nearly gone for him, and all matter become diaphanous forevermore. Strange mood for banker in America!

Before passing on, he looked back once again at the tall magnolia—that tree which, if Patricia could be trusted as a judge, was a plain symbol of himself. A breeze sprang up in the branches of the great tree, with a joyous sound of much wonderful

singing before the Lord. The sound, then, sank by slow degrees into a melancholy sigh, but, returning as a sudden, fierce, and inexplicable gust, rushed up against the side of the house, where it broke Patricia's roses into pieces and played wild havoc with the heliotrope. Peter shuddered. Then, giving a last glance at the house, he strode away swiftly toward the Starlight and Southeastern depot, jingling cheerily the few metallic disks which still remained in his pocket and flapping the leaves of his hymn book vigorously, also fearing lest he might be late for Patricia's train.

When he entered the station, however, and looked at the bulletin board, he saw that Patricia's train was three hours later than had been supposed when first he had heard from it—at the bank.

CHAPTER III

Where Two Are Gathered Together

Grounch and Burley, after the unexpected conclusion of the wild lynching scene, went up to Grounch's office for a smoke. There, as runneth the saying, "they felt of each other." Each saw plainly enough that the other was pondering some deep-laid scheme for the punishment and humiliation of Peter Samuels, yet, too, each in his heart was afraid to bare that scheme before the other. What if that other should ever tell?

So Burley took his lawyer friend down to dinner at a near-by restaurant, and, later, having fetched him into his own office, where he felt more at ease, burst out suddenly: "Say, Grounch, if it takes a thousand years I'm gonna beat Pete Samuels. Pete needn't feel so stuck up just because he's got more learnin' 'n I have. Say, Grounch, Pete's took an' taken a correspondence course in law, and now he thinks he's a lawyer. The fool keeps a lot o' law books on his desk in the office there at the bank. I've seen 'em there. Reads an' reads, an' the more he reads the less he knows, *I* think."

"It's never good strategy," replied Grounch in a considering tone, "to underestimate your opponent's strength. But what we're up to now is how to get the quarry control." Burley gave a great gasp. Grounch went on, "You and I together lack just five

shares of having that control. So does Peter Samuels. Now Secretary of State Muggins owns just those five shares we need. We must get them."

Burley acted as if the thought were new to him. There was no particular point in his so doing, for he understood clearly that Grounch must have seen through him all along, but he was secretive in any case and by habit. "Grounch, you couldn't buy them there shares off Muggins if you owned Starlight."

"Think so?"

"I know so."

Burley was a close observer of faces, and, as he scanned the countenance of Grindon Grounch, he suddenly threw up his hands and gave a wild cry: "Grounch! Grounch! You got somepin' up your sleeve. I know it. You have, Grounch!"

"That's true," Grounch admitted. "Mr. Burley, listen to me. Mr. Muggins doesn't know that Mr. Samuels double-crossed him in the late election. I, however, know it."

Burley's whole attitude changed. He broke in brutally: "You're a liar, Grounch. Pete never double-crossed nobody ner nothin' at no time, early or late. I hate him, an' I'm gonna get even with him, but he ain't never double-crossed nobody. Why, Pete tried to make a good boy out o' Monty. Years an' years ago he tried to make him a missionary or somepin'. An' jest today he saved him from committin' a lynchin'. Why, old Muggins nearly worships Pete."

"He won't worship him when he knows what I know." Grounch leaned close and whispered, "Monty himself had done the crime he was going to lynch old Ephraim for."

Burley gave a low whistle, and studied Grounch's face relentlessly.

The lawyer went on: "And the negro was the only witness to his act."

Burley was incapable of speech now. He merely looked his astonishment.

"Eph told me himself, and Eph doesn't lie. You see now why Monty was so bitter about the negro's rape. That rape was his own, and he wanted to lynch the only witness to it."

Burley took out a big cigar, bit off one end, lighted the other and began sucking with great assumed deliberation. "Well, and so?"

"Well and so I'm going to go over to the Secretary of State's office this very minute, and ask the gentleman for those five shares. I'll offer him twice their value. He'll refuse of course, because Peter Samuels almost owns him. Then come in I with a full account of all that I, Grindon Grounch, have done for him, Christopher Muggins. Kept his only child, for one thing, from being prosecuted for a terrible crime." His face perceptibly hardened. "I—don't—suppose," he mused, "that—that— I don't really suppose that the charge could be made to stick. The girl's only half witted. But if I thought the charge would stick, then, stock or no stock, quarry or no quarry, I'd prosecute— I'd—

By God, I'd— By God!" He was raging almost like a maniac.

Burley jumped to his feet, and grasped the man by both shoulders. "You get that stock, Grounch. You hear? You get it, and get it quick. Hear? I made you prosecutin' attorney. You wouldn't of been elected without me, an' don't you go to prosecutin' Monty an' so not get no stock."

Grounch stepped to the window and looked over at the State House—looked in fact at the very window whereby, as he well knew, Christopher Muggins would be sitting that moment. After a time, when Burley's huge form had paced the floor again and again, the attorney resumed. "No, I don't suppose it's any use to prosecute. Chris would beat us anyway. There's his influence for one thing, and that's very great. Then again, who'd believe the nigger in a rape case against a white man. And the girl's an imbecile, probably has forgotten the whole affair by now. No, I tell you plainly, Mr. Burley, I'd prosecute in a minute if—if I really thought—"

He went on, "But then, on the other hand, can we get the shares?"

Burley: "You can easily show Chris that you're his friend—that's why you don't prosecute his son."

"But I've got to do more than just show Chris that I'm his friend. I must show him also that Peter Samuels is his enemy."

"It can't be done. I hate Pete, but he ain't never double-crossed nobody." There came into Burley's

mind the time, long ago, when he himself had "double-crossed" Peter. They were mere boys then. He came within an ace of talking about this to the attorney, but thought better of the idea, shook his head morosely, and reiterated: "Pete Samuels never double-crossed nobody."

"He *seems* to have done so." Grounch's face was a study. It said so very much more than his words. In that moment William Burley hated Grindon Grounch far more than he did his old-time rival and enemy, Peter Samuels. In fact, he kept his eyes on the floor so that their expression of venomous contempt might not be revealed to this lawyer whose assistance he so greatly needed. At length said Burley, "You prove it to me that Pete Samuels is a traitor before you go provin' it to the Secretary of State."

Grounch first looked all about the room. Then he took from his pocket three documents. The first was a check for five thousand dollars drawn by Peter Samuels to Samuel Sharp, well known political ringster, who, in the last election, had posed as Muggins's friend, but who, in some strange way, had lately come to be suspected of having worked against him. The second document that Grounch laid before Burley was a short note, wholly in typewriting. It was on the official paper of the Starlight First National, and it ran: "My dear Sharp:—Enclosed you will please to find what I promised to pay you for your services in that case. You did well to conduct the matter so mysteriously. Please

keep it a secret forevermore. We are certainly justified in doing as we did. Your friend." There was no other signature.

The third of the documents was another brief note, also in typing and on the official paper of the Samuels bank, but it bore an earlier date than the former letter, and—yet another dissimilarity—it was signed. It ran: "My dear Sharp:—My intentions have suffered a great change since last I saw you. That man Muggins is wholly unfit for the place, and I will therefore no longer stand by him even as a way to please friends. I have tried a dozen times or more to get you over the phone, but without result. Hence this letter. Thine, Peter Samuels."

When Burley had finished reading the three documents, he exclaimed: "Grounch, you got the evidence, but you ain't convinced me."

Grounch looked a disgusted question.

"First place, if it was really evidence, you'd have prosecuted Peter Samuels long ago. You hate Pete, and you're a born prosecutor. You love the very excitement of prosecutin'. Second place, I ain't no lawyer, judge ner nothin', but I know Pete plays fair."

Grounch took up the documents. "I have not said I would not prosecute Peter Samuels. Burley, remember I am simply trying to pay my indebtedness to you. According to some, I'm a bad man, but my debts I do always surely pay. Still, if you don't want the stock—"

A great rich boom rolled out of the northern district. Blasting in Church Rock now! Burley was a poet, in his way. He saw, of a sudden, the great quarries, all at work again after a period of enforced idleness: the hundreds of men rushing about; the roaring, shining tracks; the puffing, ringing, flashing engines; the rolling, rumbling cars— Then he beheld the money, the great piles and stacks of money, and all the kowtowing that the money and the quarry would bring him. He hesitated a moment longer. "BOOM!" went the quarries again.

"What's your terms?"

"Give me your check to pay for all of Muggins's stock. Two of the shares will be taken in my name, the other three in yours. The rest of my pay will consist in the satisfaction I shall have in knowing I have beaten Peter Samuels. Transgressors have to pay."

"Well," said Burley, "I hate to beat Pete, an' yet I reckon I got to. I *will* have my dues."

"BOOM!" went the grand voice of the quarry again.

"Wait here," said Grounch. "Chris stays in his office every night till twelve o'clock or after. A great worker, Christopher Muggins."

It was full two hours before Grindon returned. But then he laid before the banker the two new certificates of stock. One of these he put in his own bill-fold, saying: "We found the Secretary of the Company, and had him enter the two transfers in his record."

Burley drew his check and gave it to Grounch. Taking up the other transfer and putting it in his pocket, he stepped to the phone. "Three-six-eight. Right. That you, Walter? Well, say, is the car in order? Not yet? Hell's wheels! O never mind. Why, of course, he'll overcharge us, but I'll beat him yet: I will have my dues. I'll walk—need some exercise anyway, I guess. Tell my daughter Elizabeth: I am walking down to the Starlight and Southeastern to meet the new cook. He makes the best lark pies, tell her. Tell Elizabeth—tell my daughter, he makes the best lark pies. O whenever *he* gets in. Train's late, an' nobody knows how much later it'll be. Bye.—Grounch, did you ever eat pies made plumb completely out o' larks?"

But Grounch was at the window, shaking a great hairy fist toward the Samuels bank. "Transgressors," he snarled and snarled, "must pay, must pay." He hated Peter not only because Peter had opposed his election to the prosecutorship, but even more because, being radical and bitter by nature, he felt an instinctive passion to pull down and humble into the dust Starlight's most prominent citizen. There even escaped him a threat of yet further mischief to be done to Peter Samuels.

He did not explain to Burley the exact nature of his threat, but there had come into his mind the vision of a long-gone time. He saw an aged Chinaman who had entered his office with an air of great humility. The Chinaman took a seat, then unfolded his mission. He had just left with Peter Samuels,

he said, as a sacred trust a string of invaluable rubies. These he so described that Grounch, some day, might easily identify them. He even caused Grounch to write down the markings of the stones. "To Mr. Samuels himself," said the Chinaman, "I am not telling that anyone but him knows of the sacred confidence which has been reposed in him. Yet, as a matter of precaution, I am telling the secret to you—who, I understand, is his enemy. One day a young Chinaman will appear in Starlight and will say: 'Where are the stones? Let them be as things that were kept most sacredly both for us and for Christ.' If Mr. Samuels is the Christian that I take him to be, he will say to the young man: 'Here are the stones.' And he will give him the stones. If he does not give him the stones, the claimant (my descendant) will come here to you and will ask your help to recover them. He may come to you first. Here is money for your compensation. Samuels is a churchman, you an outsider. I wonder which will be the truer to his trust."

All these matters of many years before returned now quite vividly into the mind of Grindon Grounch. He would not forget the trust. If Mr. Samuels should forget—!

CHAPTER IV

One Who Resisteth Him That Knocketh

When Peter learned that Patty's train was three hours later than had originally been supposed, his first thought was to go promptly back home, wait there till nearly train time, and then return to the depot. But when he reflected how extremely lonesome the big old house would probably be (for all the servants were on vacation—except old Henry, who invariably returned to his cabin in Shantytown at night) he decided not to go back. The house was very dear to him. It had belonged to Pat's father, and at his death had gone to Pat, who, at Peter's urgent solicitation, had sold it (at a very high price) to Peter. Peter was just like that, he would not live in his wife's house. "Is it any worse for *you* to live in *my* house than for *me* to live in *yours?*" Thus Patty. But she sold, and she lived on very happily in Peter's, or their, house. So with all the things that dear old father-in-law had left them. Some of these, it is true, had been devised to Peter. Peter accepted them, but paid Patty their full value and more. Not a man to take the equivalent of money from his wife's relatives without fullest compensation, was Peter Samuels.

But the old home! He always had felt that he never had really and fairly paid for that. Every nook and corner of the place was, somehow, associated with the childhood of Patty, hence too precious

to be paid for in cold cash. Patty, like Peter himself, had been an only child, and her most familiar companions at first had therefore been the inanimate objects of her father's great yard. Many, too, in consequence, were her own associations with every ell and inch thereof. How Peter had loved to listen to Patty's still almost infantile chatter, had, in fact, as the years rolled by, adopted, so to speak, those reminiscences, those associations, of his wife's childhood and made them as his very own. Indeed he went much farther than that. In his vivid, impulsive, imaginative way, he had frequently feigned that, in his boyhood, he had lived just yonder across the street, there in big Bill Burley's old home, and that the most of his time, outside school hours, had been spent over here with Patty in her father's yard. What yarns Peter had concocted about that hypothetic childhood of his and Patty's. And how magical little Pat had found them! How she had listened for hours at a time, mouth open, pearly teeth exposed to full view, clapping her little hands again and again and crying eagerly: "I remember, I remember! Wasn't it all fine!"

No, very clearly Peter could not go back to the house just now. Lonesome, too lonesome! "What if," thought he, "on a day, Patricia should be dead! Why, then he never could return to the dear old place at all. How extremely terrifying! He must look more carefully to Patty's health than he had heretofore done. How careless he had been! Periodical examinations hereafter!"

Meanwhile, he believed he would seek some quiet place where he could sit and rest. These long days in the bank fatigued him immensely. Straight was just right, Straight was. He needed exercise.

He walked round the side of the station and into Railroad Avenue, saluting here and there people whom he knew, yet, for the most part, deeply introspective. There had followed him all the way from the old house, yes even from the church where he had heard the ringing of the bells, a mood hard to shake off—a mood of poignant, infinite yearning. Ever since he had left the missionary college and devoted himself to finance, he had felt the cross-pull of the ministry. Now he felt it more than ever—pulling, pulling. He would think of that no more. Patricia was coming tonight: think of that.

Now, along the railroad tracks for a mile or more, and then, at length, into a place where it seemed that the deepest privacy was, privacy and rest that is good for the soul. There was here, behind a shed which belonged to the railroad company, a pile of old, rusting iron rails, which, for some strange reason, had never been removed. Quoth Peter, "I must look into this. Strange how careless some of the department heads are getting to be. Ah-h-h!"

He sat on a lower portion of the rail-pile, leaning his weary back against the upper part thereof. "When a man's tired, even iron rails feel good. Ah-h-h!" He flipped the leaves of his hymn book softly, and softly jingled his coins.

There was a near-by quiet and a far-away turmoil

that fitted very neatly into his frame of mind. Behind him, at a great distance over in the yards of another line, went the muffled rollings of many heavy freight trains. Before him and below, far below, spread the whole great valley of the Starlight, in its middle the business district of the city serrated with dark or luminous office-buildings and criss-crossed with radiant streets. Over at the right, somewhere, was a throb of drums: circus, or menagerie, playing. Nearer at hand, on a pile of ties, were young men talking and laughing in subdued tones.

The day had been a hot one, and now, at eve, the air was full of the breath of sunburnt weeds and humble, trodden flowers. Little sweet winds, too, from time to time arose and spoke to him. He liked to brood over the many beauties of the world, the mysteries of the cosmos, the inner meaning of all created things. That touch of air upon his cheek, what did that signify? He felt very sure that nothing in all the wide universe was wholly devoid of a profound, a divine meaning. The moving clouds, the invisible air, the most commonplace objects about him, even the great commercial city yonder, with its multicolored signs flaring up and disappearing silently like hundreds of fireflies, all, all were only great expressions of the Deity.

Down in the valley, a little to the left of him, rose the one lofty spire and two great square towers of the church, *his* church. In the same straight line, but over the river, stood Church Rock—there beyond

the lighting and unlighting city, beyond even the lesser ranges of the hills which, thus far, the city had not been able to attain to and to cover. How it stood up, a gigantic duplication of the Samuels church, but larger, very much larger indeed, and really seeming larger also, though at a vastly greater distance away from him. And this rock, or church-like mountain, was strangely lit up with multitudes of tiny lights, moving or unmoving, for the quarries in Church Rock, as Peter now recalled, were, after a long period of enforced idleness, again at work.

The big Samuels church was all dark, and growing rapidly darker.

"BOOM!" went the noise of a vast explosion over in the distant quarry. The sound echoed and re-echoed over all Starlight, dying away at last in faint, far reduplications in the region of the old Catholic Burying Ground. As if at the sound of battle, Peter's nostrils went wide. He saw himself once more in the busy quarries, beheld the multitudes of sweaty workmen rushing all about, heard the puffing and ringing and clashing of engines and the rolling of cars. Then too he saw the piles of money and the great kowtowing which all these things would bring him, did he only possess a controlling interest in the quarry stock. "I must see Christopher Muggins tomorrow," thought Peter, "and either buy, beg or wheedle out of him those five big shares of Church Rock stock. Failing that—"

His eye was caught by a little flush of rosy light which the sun, now setting, was beginning to cast

on the topmost portion of the spire of Church Rock. A moment of hesitation, then—the whole great sky was illuminated with the light of the dying sun. Peter felt his very soul expanding. There is no gulf between the physical and the psychical. So, when God cast his colors across the great screen of the sky, he cast them also in the eyes of Peter Samuels, in his brain, in his spirit. And God, so, conveyed to the banker many otherwise inexpressible thoughts. There be other symbols of ideas than mere human speech, and the glory of God's pavilion is more expressive, to men like Peter Samuels, than even the words of the Book.

It was too much rapture. Peter resisted the apocalypse, and heard again, though as if in a far dream, the noise of blasting in the distant quarries. Far away, too, a train of "empties" rolled hollowly along, over there by the side of the old Burying Ground. These noises died all at once away, and, as if a veil of acoustic obstruction had been suddenly torn in twain, he caught, through the rent so made, the distant music of an African menagerie. The world of the sky was revealing the Lord once again, and, as of old, speaking of His majesty, His goodness, His power, but, down in the lower Starlight, the wild beast band throbbed and drubbed, and its brazen horns, from time to frequent time, fairly sang the words of a nasty song. From time to time, too, a lion, raging, lifted up its crude imperial raucousness across the civilization of the city. The drums throbbed and drubbed. The boys, near by,

discussed the merits of chewing gum, and by-Godded again and again. Excremental stories followed, the quarries boomed. At last, out came the stars.

Peter never could resist the stars—God's greatest pictures hung against God's ancient walls. Ah! bright-wheeling galaxies, shadows as ye be of God's inmost thoughts, else ineffable! And God, thou—O great Pattern-Maker, Pattern-Maker! As through the infinite both of space and time thine atoms and electrons journey without sojourn, what unrepeating and irrepeatable patterns dost thou not trace therewith! O God—O Pattern-Maker incomprehensible! O Pattern-Maker, Pattern-Maker!

Peter, the mystic, worshipped in the temple of the universe. Up the steep slope of heaven came God's unnumbered hosts. Still came. His imagination rode far between them—on and on, nor found shore, haven anywhere out of matter. Then he felt the molten tide of mystic passion rush into his soul, heard the call to mystic union with his Creator, the demand that Peter should suffer the Lord to come into his heart completely and forevermore—not, as before that, only now and then and in bits and fragments.

He suddenly resisted—resisted terribly and with craven fear, resisted to his uttermost and with all that iron will. And his resistance was born of his own overtopping ambition, his illimitable pride, his selfish worldliness. These and the Lord could not long dwell together, could not indeed exist together at all. "Blessed are the stars," cried Peter, "and

the spaces beyond the stars, and the spaces beyond the infinite spaces—those that are in our own souls!" But he suffered not the Lord wholly to enter into him.

A shrill whistle sounded up the track, and the pounding exhaust of an approaching passenger train.

Peter glanced at his watch. Snapped it shut, pocketed it and ran. He knew he must be late, and yet he kept on running, rushed into the side-door of the station, and, working gently, as was his wont, through the thick surge of men and women, got, at long length, into the midway, or lobby, of the train-shed—only to learn there that Patricia's train, which had been a little delayed outside the shed, was just puffing in.

CHAPTER V

Mr. Burley, the Unconscious Engenderer of Visions

As he waited, Peter heard a familiar noise behind him and turned. Midway of the mad rush was a large man with arms out wide, thrusting, elbowing, shoving, digging—yes, he was even butting with his huge square head. As he came on, he shouted: "My cook—cook—cook—cook—cook!" It was William Burley, otherwise known to the citizens of Starlight as "Dollar Bill," also "Physical Bill." Certain people in the crowd, hearing the noise, also faced about, and, seeing the human engine catapulting, got hurriedly out of the way. Of a sudden, Burley, catching sight of Peter, rushed straight up to him, and grasped him with both his hands. "Have you seen him?" he shouted. "Have you seen him? Has he come?"

"Why, has *who* come?" asked Peter.

"The Messiah of pies. The greatest cook that ever— Makes the best lark pies! O Peter, have you ever et a large lark pie as I have done—'did' I mean?"

"I have certainly never eaten one as you have et it," said Peter.

"Language cannot express," said William, innocently and still fervently, "the kind of pies that that man makes. Met him in a big hotel in Philadelphia.

Come back home. Opened negotiations with him, not as if I wanted him too much. There he is! No he ain't! But now I guess I lost him. Yes, I lost him. He ain't come—came. O cook, cook, cook, cook! I wonder if you have really went back on me, cook. Remember I will have my dues, cook. Remember that, all Starlight. I will simply have my dues."

Just at this moment, he jumped away from Peter and saluted a woman almost as large as himself, but bony rather than obese, and with a sweet, if strong and somewhat masculine, countenance—Elizabeth, his wife. "Liz, you haven't seen him?" So Burley.

"William," said Elizabeth, "I have done my duty. Knowing he was to have come in on the same train with me, I went all up and down the aisles of all the cars, but I'm sure I never saw him. I have done my duty. Good evening, Mr. Samuels. You aren't looking for Patricia?"

"Indeed I am," quoth Peter. "I cannot understand why she hasn't come."

"So you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?" A mad throbbing in his heart.

"Don't get excited, Mr. Samuels. Patty took a notion to come on the three thirteen. So she came on it. I tried to get her not to. I have done my duty."

"Poor Pat!" cried Peter. "And I passed the house, where you must have been, came on here, and wasted three long hours, and didn't know— Are you very sure she came on the three thirteen?"

"Very sure indeed."

"Strange she didn't phone to me at the bank."

"Shut up, Pete, and walk home with us. My taxi's in the repair shop, same's yourn. Straight has told me, anyway, to take more exercise—just the same as you've been told by him.—Course we might bump *into* something. But I guess we could stand that."

Peter smiled. He was always like that, was Peter. Ready to laugh at almost anything. If the other man was satisfied to laugh, then he was. He fell into step, and went on out of the station with the big swaggering Burley and his good, bony Puritanical wife, the former running on and on about mere physical matters, and the latter punctuating his conversation now and then with, "I have done my duty."

Once she looked up to the throbbing stars and said, "I love God terribly on a night like this." But Peter, who knew her mood, was not a man to converse in an incidental way of such things, especially before a man like Burley, and Burley did not even understand her. Peter, therefore, said: "Is it not wonderful!"—no more, and Burley went on about his pies. "I eat an' I eat an' I eat 'an I eat. An' it seems like I couldn't never get quite enough o' that man's lark pies. I will have my dues yet." And so on. Clouds were moving up from the southeast, clouds with lightning in them and a low muttering.

Peter was greatly depressed. He felt quite sure that Pat was safe in "The Shanty," but he had been

unduly exalted by what he had seen as he sat on the pile of rails, and now had come the reaction. Moreover, he was torn and depressed by the conflicting ideals. So, in spite of his breezy, bright exterior, he was dark and dull within—all the more so as Burley—whom he was beginning to loathe in a high degree—rambled physically and endlessly on.

Peter recalled the day, now years back, when he and Burley, hardly more than boys, had started out in Starlight to look up, each for the other, a job. The underlying idea had been that any man looking up a job could look to better advantage for some other applicant than for himself. Hence, as Peter and Burley passed from office to office, from bank to bank, each was to solicit a position not for himself but for his friend—extolling, of course, to the skies that friend's peculiar qualifications. Now Peter had stood wholly true, found in fact for William a most excellent post in a trust company; but William, having run across an even better opening—or what had had all the appearances of being such—seized it instanter for his own darling self. Hence—his beginning with the Starlight Second National. Peter, later, remonstrating, was told by Burley that he would have his dues. Peter, having talked for the Trust Company's place in the name of Mr. Burley, felt that he could not consistently return and ask for the position for himself. So poor Peter, for the time, had no job. And Peter had never forgotten, quite. Kind and forgiving by nature, he could not wholly forget this bit of char-

acteristic selfishness on the part of his friend. He began to grow a little angry again even now. Then he said to himself, with a great effort: "I am wasting energy; and all should be invested to the greatest advantage."

But Burley was running on about something. "Pete," he was saying, "what's that middle initial o' yourn stand for, that there 'N'? All the boys is askin' me." Peter did not reply, and a deep flush suffused his countenance. "Some say, 'Newness,' " continued Burley, "meanin' you ain't been rich very long. An' some say, 'Nearness,' meanin' you will have your dues."

"And what," asked Peter, again good-humored by an effort, "and what, my dear good friend, do *you* tell them that it means?"

Burley hawked and spat twice. Then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I say," quoth he, with much deliberation, "I say— Of course I don't mean I'm necessarily right about it, but I do say, seein' you're so all-fired secretlike about what your middle initial *does* stand for, I say—I tell 'em, it means just 'Nothing,' that being what you really rose up from, and all that your parents ever were before you, and just about all that you yourself will ever amount to." He nudged Elizabeth and guffawed till the streets rang and all the passers-by stopped to behold the unusual matter.

Peter felt the hot blood choking him. A wild, consuming rage entered his heart. In a moment more he would have leaped on Burley and have given him

the terrible chastisement which some might have regarded as his due. But not for nothing had Peter Samuels trained the emotional part of his nature to stand at the "come" and "go" of his judgment. His reason now said "Go," and the anger went.

Yet, as Peter walked along beside these people still, he seemed preternaturally quiet. Burley ran on and on. Elizabeth asseverated from time to time that she had done her duty, and Burley replied with even more decision that he would have his dues. But these were about the only external matters that reached the ear or eye of Peter Samuels. In his heart he saw strange visions and dreamed great dreams.

"What doth it profit a man," quoth he to himself, "if he giveth a physical blow to vulgar persons like Burley? He cannot enlarge their tiny souls one barleycorn, and he only exhibits unto them his equivalent vulgarity. Why not reply to littleness with greatness?" There uprose before him, as if by magic, a gigantic edifice; a sublime poem in stone; a holy, an ineffably sacred dream made manifest that all might be able to know the true joys—be able, that is, to enter into mystic communion with Christ. In thought, Peter himself passed into the building. A vast church; an unparalleled cathedral; a gleaming, glorious gift to God—a gift that should in some sort be worthy of even Him, of even Him. Nave and transept, scarlet light and purple—outside again: the portico, the apostles, the angels, archangels, Christ. He saw all as if it now existed. He

had been, in a way, a student of architecture, and innumerable plans of unspeakable beauty rushed through his imagination. "Sell all that thou hast and give it to a great cathedral." So a rapturous voice seemed to cry to him. "Could I build it, even so?" he asked. At first he believed not; later, he wondered.

"Pete," broke in Burley, "have you got the controllin' interest yet in Church Rock?"

"Not yet," laughed Peter. "Been too busy—'tend to it tomorrow." He was a little startled by this interruption; so extremely rude and raw it seemed under all the circumstances.

Then there came into Peter's mind a brand new thought. The church which he had just imagined should be built from the quarries in Church Rock. Thanks to Mr. Burley for that idea at least. There was fine stone in Church Rock, none finer. Tomorrow he would indeed "attend to it." Why, thus far, had he been so slothful about getting Chris's shares? They could easily be got.

He looked at Burley quizzically. That gentleman was picking his teeth with a gold toothpick which displayed a diamond at the non-picking end. Said Burley, as if continuing a former subject: "What I dreamed last night was that Satan himself walked into my library and tried to get into me. It was a damned queer way to take possession too that he tried. I was to be jumped into by my mouth. He tried to gather himself together and make himself little and jump into me, so I yells for help. Then

came a big bright angel. Said Satan, 'This here Burley's too coarse to be the abidin' place o' any decent spirit like you.' Says the angel, 'Scat!' And Satan scatted. Then the angel turned into a—turned into—'' He was puffing under the weight of his wife's satchel.

''Into a lark,'' suggested Peter.

Burley looked at him amazed. ''Was you *there?*''

''As good as there,'' laughed Peter. ''But I'll warrant you didn't get to make a pie out of *that* lark.''

''No, I didn't,'' growled Burley. ''But if ever I dream that dream again, I'll have— Well, I *will* have my dues. That's all. Say, Pete, hear that low moanin' sound over yander?''

Pete listened, wondering just what noise Burley could have in mind. He did indeed catch, now and again, various mournful groanings from far beyond the river, there in the general direction of Slumtown.

''That low moanin' cry,'' said Burley, meaning a half compliment, ''is the wolf just outside your front door.''

''I'll throttle him with my hands,'' cried Peter. Then, saying abruptly: ''Take care of yourselves,'' he dashed across the street to his house.

Burley shouted after him, ''That's our specialty. Say, Pete, in the mornin' look into the matter of Church Rock, and you'll find I have my dues.''

CHAPTER VI

The Echo Wife

Peter did not even hear the last words of Burley. He rushed into the house, crying: "Pat! Pat! Where are you, Pat?"

For a moment, he believed she had not come. Then appeared Pat, demurely tripping down the wide, brilliantly lighted staircase. She looked upon Peter for a moment with adoration. "My sweet old dreamer!" she said softly. Then she came and laid her golden head on his right shoulder, as he stooped for the purpose. Pete patted the hair for a time. "Dreamer!" he said, at length. "Why do you call me 'dreamer'?"

"Dreamer! You went on past the house this very afternoon, while I was whistling for you from an upstairs window. I whistled louder. On you went, head up, and *lost* in dreams. I would have shouted, only I couldn't stoop to that."

"Why hadn't you phoned me at the bank?"

"I *had* phoned. 'Line busy,' every time. I would have scolded, only I couldn't stoop. So I went and dressed again, and took the street car for the bank. At State House Square I saw—O goodness, what I saw! Why, those horrid men! How could they ever stoop— Peter, stop laughing. Why do you laugh— I see nothing to laugh at. White men never seem to want to give a colored man—"

A great boom of thunder resounded over all Starlight, growled raucously and imperiously for one sublime moment as if it were a mighty lion up in heaven, then thud-thudded away in the general direction of Church Rock.

When the sound had passed, Patricia raised her head from Peter's shoulder. At her changed face he gazed with frank astonishment—almost as though he never had seen her before. "Pat! *Why* afraid?"

"I'm not afraid of thunder, Peter. It's Church Rock."

"Go and stand over there, and let me have a good real squint at you."

She went and leaned against the stair-post.

"You've always been afraid of Church Rock. Why?"

"I had a terrible dream once about a fearful explosion there—I can't tell you."

Peter continued to look over at and down upon her. She was a small porcelain blonde, with great soulful eyes, that were sometimes blue and sometimes a grayish slate color, but always affectionate and proud. The mouth was small, the lips prettily curved, the under one a trifle petulant perhaps. When Peter was halfway through declaiming about the years she seemed to have cast away on this last vacation in the country, she made a horrible contortion of countenance, stuck out her tiny tongue, then cried mocking: "How much money, my dear Mr. Samuels, do you want to borrow from me tonight?"

"I don't know," he said, as she came closer again and reached him a small, well-shaped hand, with a blood-red ruby on one of its fingers—symbol of the eternal covenant between Peter and herself. "I never know how much you have—you never tell me. Pat," he exclaimed in great earnest, "are you sure—perfectly sure now—that all your property is invested to the greatest advantage?"

"You mean my money. My property is not invested at all, sir, but my money—"

"Of your very own—you know—"

"Yes, I know. You never would stoop to touch a dollar of it. I thought the more of you for that. You couldn't stoop— Why! I just can't tell how much I have now, Peter. Don't bother. You needn't worry. In any case I couldn't let you handle my property for me. I really couldn't stoop."

"All right. Be careful, though."

"I *am* careful."

"And always take advice of somebody."

"I always take advice of somebody. But, of my husband—Peter, there's one thing certain. I love you dearly, but I can't let you tell me what I should and what I should not—at least with my—"

"Be it so, Gloria." This term was Peter's "make-up" name for his wife. And she loved the very sound of the word so well that it almost invariably worked upon her like magic, changing even a mood of deepest depression or sharp ill-temper into one of cheerfulness and joy.

She laughed, childlike. "Anyway, if I go broke,

you have your Aunt Jemima's inheritance. You remember her words, Peter? 'Some day you children will love this little old bequest from Aunt Jemima.' Peter, you're not listening. She said— She said— She *said*—"

"I *am* listening," said Peter. "She had deprived herself, as she declared, of the very necessities of life, in order that we, her only heirs, though richer than she (I should think we were, Pat) might inherit those poor old dried up sections of unproductive land in Texas. Dear old Aunt! I wouldn't sell that land— It's not worth taxes, but I wouldn't sell it. Pat, I couldn't—" He was about to say, "stoop," but refrained.

There was a note of anxiety in the air. The storm was still muttering. A sudden bang of thunder, and a solitary, majestic roll went over once again in the way of Church Rock. Pat began to show wide pupils once more, and to expatiate vividly on the old-time reasons for her dread of Church Rock. Then, "Peter, you aren't listening. Peter, *Peter!*"

Said Peter, "No, dear Pat, I have too big a plan to tell you, to listen much to—I—I—want to talk to you about it. I—Pat, you've often said I ought to have been a preacher, haven't you?"

"I've often said! *Everybody* says. Why, Peter, coming on the train this very day, half a dozen people were speaking to me about you—as was quite natural—and each and every one of them declared with might and main, and with all the power that in him lay—"

"My goodness!" shouted Pete, in mock alarm.

"That you ought to have been a preacher."

"Thank heaven! I thought it was going to be the penitentiary or something."

"Maybe the poorhouse—that's worse. Peter, why *don't* you preach? We've quite enough money. I alone have quite enough money."

"And I alone—but I'm not alone. Pat, *you are* alone. Patricia Samuels, the solitary financier!"

"What's that plan?"

"Pat—" His voice became grave. A sudden calm descended over his erstwhile vivid features. Pat never so worshipped her husband as when he settled down to dignity and solemn consideration of some tremendous thing—quarry, bank, railroad, so on. Then suddenly, "Peter, I never do think so much of you as when you look big—I mean great. You *are* great. A certain young man on the train today, said about you— He was a broker from New York. He knew all about you, Peter. Called you the most wonderful man he ever had known. Said you could read the Bible in Greek and Hebrew, had looked a little into art, studied almost everything—land, money, crops, farm implements, hardware, groceries, clothing and dry goods. Specialists went to see you, he said, about their own business. All of them marvelled at your knowledge. What you didn't know about everything, he said—"

"His name!" cried Peter. "I can't wait! His name!"

Pat turned crimson, and hesitated strangely, either from confusion or from anger. "You *shall* wait," she cried. "You shall wait very long—in fact until I tell you."

Peter at once thought again of his great plan, but feared, in Patricia's present humor, to mention it. However, he started in thus—

"Gloria!"

She turned a delighted face toward him. Patricia was always just like that: a word, just a single, simple word, could always change her immediately. But it had to be the right word: note that well. Then, too, people in general had their minds changed easily by Peter Samuels.

"I'll listen, Pete. And whatever the great plan is, I promise in advance to consent to it absolutely—provided it accords with my own sound judgment." At this she laid a small white forefinger by the side of her Greek nose, puckered up her mouth and brow, and looked the embodiment of mock wisdom.

Peter ignored the attitude. "All our lives," he continued, "we have worked very hard."

She held out two soft, doll-like hands. "Look at the callouses, if you don't believe it."

"Not in that way, Pat, but with our brains. And God has blessed us, given us much wealth. Now all should be invested to the greatest advantage."

"Do you know, Pete, you have a way, sometimes—the funniest way of saying the same thing

over and over. For example: Let all be invested to the greatest advantage."

Peter laughed. "And you, Pat. Do you do such things?"

"Indeed I don't," said Patty petulantly. "I couldn't stoop to that."

Peter laughed joyously, and Pat turned crimson. Where is the woman, old or young, large or little, blonde or brunette, that can take a mocking laugh good-naturedly?

Pete cried, "Gloria! Gloria!" as if he were begging her pardon, caught her tight up in his arms, and thus held her while she protested vigorously and volubly—not indeed against the tight holding, but at being made "the butt and target of a lot of stupid jests."

As the rapid-fire utterance grew more and more rapid continually, Peter at length clapped a large firm hand over her little soft mouth, then proceeded to state his plan—calmly, briefly, baldly, even crudely. He intended, that is to say, to erect a new church—at his own expense to erect it, asking help from nobody—a new church here in Starlight, there on the very site of the old one, "just across the street from us."

Then he uncovered Pat's mouth.

Pat stood off a little way and looked at him strangely, also in continued silence.

This was Peter's chance. He expatiated. Church? It should be a divine cathedral, a celestial dream in stone, a monument for untold centuries to the beauty,

the goodness, the sublimity of God. It would make man's union with the Lord most easy. He kept on talking, and Pat cried.

Pete thought it his eloquence that made her cry. In part it was. But, in addition, Pat had remembered a dear dream of her own (which she never yet had mentioned even to Peter) a dream she had cherished for long years, a dream of a great palace for her own little body—a domicile, rather, that should, while ostensibly a house for both of them, be as a monument to Peter Samuels, her husband, Peter the Great, Peter the Unlimited, Peter the Almost Divine. She saw that dream again, but saw it fading, saw the bright marble edifice she would have been so proud to construct, here on the old, old corner, her father's corner, fading, fading, and shifting, shifting—till at length it had shifted to the corner over yonder, there across the street, changing its shape and semblance from that of a brilliant home to that of a still more brilliant cathedral. She knew that, if the church were built, this present house would have to suffice her and Peter continually, yes until the very end. On the other hand, the church! It would be a still greater monument (would it not?) to Peter Samuels than the finest of mere houses could possibly be —a monument to Peter's goodness, his power, his all-persuasiveness, his— Peter was *her* God.

She did not resist when Peter came up to her, and took her again in his arms, saying: "Answer.

Are you with me on this plan?" She stood atiptoe in order that she might be able, thus, to lay her tiny, silently pulsing ear opposite his big, big heart, and listen to its strong beating—almost too strong. "For Pat! For Pat! For Pat!" So it seemed continually to say to her.

Peter did not now have to call her "Gloria." He only waited while she listened. Then, at length: "My answer."

Pat took her face from his breast and turned it up toward his, and Peter was wrung to the soul by the look which he saw. All the rest of his life he remembered that look, that expression of intense self-sacrifice, of extreme adoration, not indeed for God but for him, Peter Samuels.

He whispered, "Answer."

She who had almost always been so ready with a word, so facile with enormous crowds of words that they sometimes appeared to come stumbling one over another, did not utter a syllable. She merely relaxed her hold on her husband's arms, slid down between them, and so on down, down to Peter's very feet. There she clasped his ankles, and still failed to utter one single sound.

Peter did not immediately urge her to get up. For one sweet, immortal moment he enjoyed the situation. Then, deeply ashamed of himself, he started to say: "Pat, I didn't think you'd stoop to that," but, with a poignant pang, forebore, and, reaching down, uplifted his wife in his arms, while she wore the same expression still upon her face.

"It's getting late, Pat. And you've had a long journey." That was all he said then.

"Where shall you get the money, Peter? Have you enough?"

"No, by no means. Not to build the kind of church I mean to build. But I can get it. In the first place, there's Church Rock. If I could secure a controlling interest in the quarry, and I can, it would simplify matters. My own, own stone, you know."

The telephone rang. Peter answered. The house was very still, and Patricia caught both sides of the conversation that ensued.

"Peter Samuels' residence."

"This Burley, Pete. I thought you'd like to know, 'fore goin' to bed, that I got today, me'n Grounch, a controllin' interest in Church Rock." All was deep stillness. After a little: "Don't take it too hard, old man, but the dirt you done Muggins in the last election turned the trick."

"Dirt! I did Christopher Muggins no dirt."

"That's all right. That's what I told everybody. But Muggins thought you done him dirt, and he sold his shares to me an' Grounch. Ta ta, Peter, an' pleasant dreams."

Burley had hung up, but Peter stood for a very long time, wide-eyed, and with the receiver still in both hands. At last he restored the instrument to its hook awkwardly, and turned to look at Pat.

Pat was sobbing. But Peter: "Never mind, Pat. There's the Starlight and Southeastern. I can get control of that, and Burley can't beat me at it.

Besides—by the very law itself!—why, how stupid! Old Eph Morrison— I can get Church Rock after all. Pat, I can surely get Church Rock. If not, I can borrow— I can borrow—"

"You mustn't borrow on the Chinese rubies."

Peter looked at her wide-mouthed. "I certainly never thought about borrowing on the Chinese rubies."

In the night, long after Peter and Pat had gone to their respective bed-chambers and had lightly slept, a strange sweet sound broke on the stillness round about the house, for, deep in the visionary hours of the night, things unusual may be attempted. There had come, namely, certain young men of the choir in Peter's church to a place underneath Peter's window, singing sacredly to his respected ears their newest and dearest songs. Peter, hearing and going to the casement, there, when they had finished, underneath God's stars threw out his own sweet tenor into the night and into God's souls which filled the young men's bosoms. O who else could sing so earnestly, or who so deeply understand the spiritual necessities of those that had sweetly challenged Peter with their song? The city itself appeared to be singing (as Peter sang). The stars above the city sang also, and the whole ineffable vision of eternity came forth for one Christlike moment into sinful time. Peter's voice lingered, lasted, swayed and fell.

And when it had died away completely, the young men wept.

Peter did not wake again that night, for he did not again sleep. He simply remained throughout the morning hours, quivering with ambition. It was sweet to be thus remembered, to be honored, to be known as almost the loftiest citizen in Starlight. But he would show the stars of Starlight, big and little, things they had never yet seen or dreamed of. What he had done already was only as an atom to a mountain, compared with what he yet would do.

CHAPTER VII

Tasting the Lord with What Some Might Call "A Nigger"

After breakfast, when he was almost ready to start for the bank, he heard old Henry, his gardener, singing in the near-by rose garden of heaven and its happiness. So he went and got from his study a little black book, and went out to him.

Then he saw, in company with the old man, the old man's nephew, Recent Green. Recent's eyes expressed none of that patient supplication so common in the elderly of his race. Instead, they looked defiance and indignation. Peter spoke to the young man kindly, but he growled and grumbled to himself and went away.

Henry stopped singing for a moment, turned to the banker. "Whut you 'spect dem houses in heaven gwine be built of, Mistuh Samuels? Is dey gold or is dey iurn? Er is dey jest nacherly small little stones like dese hyeh dimunds and rubies we sees so much around us? My wife an' me wuz a-figgerin' dat very question fer hours last night."

Peter answered, recalling Bob Taylor: "Uncle Henry, you will see again in heaven your first wife, Martha, and your little boy who died in infancy. Also your own father and mother, both of whom died so long ago—the latter that her own dear son, Henry, might have life. When you have seen them

up yonder and have embraced them once again, and felt their precious lips once more on yours, you will care very little for what the heavenly houses are made of. Then, when you see Jesus himself—God—"

Uncle Henry was hoeing to hide his emotion.

Presently he broke out with a quivering voice. "Yes, Mistuh Samuels, I sho gwine see Him." Then again, "Mistuh Petuh, you knows how dey does down here in de Starlight City Hospital?"

"How's that, Uncle Henry?"

"When chillun's bohn down dah, dey's taken 'way from dey mudder. Mudders all on secon' flo', chilluns all on fo'th flo'. Dat's so de cryin' won't 'sturb de mudders endurin' de nine days. Chillun's only brought down to secon' flo' to suck, den back agin. En all dem chilluns has er ban' round dey neck wif deir name on it. Er, ef *dey* ain't got any name it's wif deir mudder's name.

"Well, 'pon a time, er kerless nuss mix de ribbons er two jes' bohn chilluns. En de chilluns ain't nevuh know de diffunce, an' de mudduhs ain't know de diffunce. So ain't anybody evuh know de diffunce 'tall.

"En' so de rich man's chile wuz brought up po', en de po' man's chile wuz brought up rich. En ain't nobody 'mire de po' rich-man's-chile, en dey ain't *skacely* anybody whut *don't* 'mire de rich po'-man's-chile."

The old man went to hoeing vigorously, just as if the conversation had suddenly come to an end.

"I'm a little dull this morning, I suspect, Uncle Henry. Anyway, I don't quite get the meaning of your parable."

"Now, Marse Petuh, en yo' sech a good preacher too, en still don't get de meanin' er no par'ble! Marse Petuh, dat rich po'-man's-chile wa'n't de son er de daughtuh er no black man."

Henry went to hoeing again.

"I think I get the point, Henry," said the banker, unusual kindness in his tone. "You mean that even an accident can bring no luck to a colored person."

Uncle Henry pretended not to hear. He turned a step or two to the right, so that his face might not be so plainly seen. Then he began singing in a strange, weird tone, full of otherwise inexpressible melancholy, his voice seeming to come from far, very far away: "Behine de veil, behine de veil. I live an' die behine de veil."

Peter understood and was visibly affected. Said he, "But after you die, Uncle Henry, you will no longer be behind the veil."

"True, Mistuh Petuh," admitted Henry, who had ceased to hoe, and stood very erect, "but er ol' no 'count nigguh sometime feel lak he wisht dey wa'n't no veil *dis* side de ribber any mo' den *ter* side. Howsomdever, carn't nuffin' be done 'bout it." After a little he added in a shrill, tragic tone: "De veil's de veil, en de Lohd place it, en cyarn't nobody tyare it away."

Once again he went to hoeing vigorously, as if to end the talk.

Peter took the little book out, and began to read in a slow, pondering way. He knew, or thought that he knew, his negro. "Louismet," he read. "Louismet: The Mystical Knowledge of God. Have you ever read this little book by Louismet?"

"No, Mastuh," admitted the old man, "ain't nevuh read it at all, suh." Still hoeing.

"If you have no objection, I will read you a passage or so. 'In Heaven we shall know God perfectly. We shall see Him even as He is and face to face, He himself being the Light that will enlighten us; we shall know even as we are known. It is not so now; we see Him but imperfectly and dimly as through a veil.' "

"Yes, Mastuh. Black en white, dey bofe lookin' through er veil when dey seein' God." Hoeing very vigorously.

"True, Uncle Henry. Now I read on: 'Yet, from the very nature of its object, even this imperfect knowledge of God is the most excellent and the most necessary of all. Alas! it is a knowledge which is rare—few there are that seek it, few desire or realize its inestimable worth. Men make great efforts to learn of things new and strange and curious, but for the things of God they seem to have no care. It is as though men thought God was of no interest, nor the knowledge of Him worth troubling about.' "

The old man was hoeing but little, in fact his arms scarcely moved.

"After this," went on Peter, "the writer declares that there be three ways of knowing God. 'The

first,' he says, 'is by natural reason; the second, by faith; the third, by love.' And having discussed the first two of these ways, with all their limitations, he passes to the third. 'There is yet,' says he, 'a higher knowledge within our grasp. This is the mystical knowledge of God, the peculiar knowledge we gain by love—by active, conscious and constant love of Him. This is a personal, experimental knowledge of God, which every Christian can obtain by the help of grace, and God does not deny His grace to those who seek it.' "

"Lord, grant dy grace," petitioned the old man fervently. His hoe had fallen. His ragged old cap was twisted up before him in his two black, bony hands. "Lord, grant dy grace. Read on, Mastuh."

"Some day," said Peter, who supposed that old Uncle Henry could not read, "I will come and discuss with you the whole book, for it is a great book and one that will make us both better men. Meanwhile I read you one more passage: 'The first and most important thing about the way of the knowledge of God by love is that it is experimental. Experimental knowledge is that attained by seeing, hearing, touching, or in any way soever coming into contact with, or being united to the object of which we seek to learn, whereby we make certain proof of this object and of its attribute. If a person had never tasted honey, but had been told that it was sweet, and had read a great deal upon the subject of honey, he would have a certain knowledge of it, but not an experimental one. But let him taste the

honey, actually put it in his mouth, and let it melt there, and feel the sensation of delight it gives him, then only will he know how sweet it was; he will have proved its sweetness and acquired an experimental knowledge of it: Knowledge of God by the way of love is of the same order. *Taste and see that the Lord is sweet* (Ps. xxxiii, 9).'

"And again, 'The loving soul finds herself in the arms and on the warm breast, if I may so speak, of this more than mother, the good God, and she loves to be there. She takes her sole delight in God, and the more she does so the more God presses her to His heart, and secretly manifests Himself to her, letting her taste and see how sweet He is.' "

Something in the old man's manner attracted Peter's eye. Glancing up, he beheld on the broad black countenance a look of divine love, of intimate and rapt union with the Lord.

" 'That soul may be very illiterate,' " went on Peter, reading softly, " 'may not be able to discourse very learnedly about God, may be very deficient in philosophical and theological acumen; but who can say that she does not know God?' "

"The Lord be praised," cried Henry. "The Lord be praised. Mistuh Petuh, dat book mek person feel jes' like yore preachin' do, Mistuh Petuh. Now de Lord be praise'."

Peter turned back to his book with a tear in his eye, for he loved old Henry, this good and faithful servant with a heart of gold, who was doomed, spite of his great loving of the Lord, to walk till the end

of his earthly days, "behind the veil," as the colored folk themselves were wont to express their own social segregation and isolation. He was very glad that, in the world to come, old Henry would no more have to walk "behine de veil." He cleared his throat, and again read:

" 'She' (that is the soul) 'has the very best knowledge of Him, the knowledge He Himself gives her personally and immediately. She has been able to make proof of God, and she has found Him very sweet indeed.

" 'Do you experience at times in the secret of your heart the delightful sweetness of spiritual consolation? Then have no sort of doubt, it is God making Himself known to you. Do you at times feel Him very near indeed, His presence in the midst of your soul, and at such times is He not like a loving friend come into his own, one in whose presence you are very much at ease? And does He not then bring with Him a joy that is not of this world? Then have no sort of doubt, it is God giving you to taste and see how sweet He is.

" 'Let us begin to love God as He would be loved. Let us now love Him with our whole heart and soul and above all things; not the world or some idol or ourselves instead of Him, but only God Himself. Then He will come to us and manifest Himself and let us taste and see how sweet He is.' "

The tears were pouring down old Henry's face. He begged Peter for the book. Peter gave it to him with a blessing, and left him to read, if he could, of

his Maker. Then went up to the house, entered it, and, having spoken to Patricia and kissed her very gently on the forehead two or three times, departed for the bank by the way of the front door. As he looked back he saw the old negro reading, yes actually reading, the little book. Going down the street, he heard, as from an infinite distance, old Henry's ecstatic voice, singing:

"'Tas' de Lord,
Yes, tas' de Lord,
Tas' Him, tas' Him,
An' see how sw-e-e-e-t He is.
Tas' Him, tas' Him, an' see how sw-e-e-e-t He is."

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Burley Can Have Dreams Himself, as Well as Beget Them in Others

The instinctive musical genius of the negro had already fitted the dear passage to a sweet tune.

And the tune which old Henry had so promptly improvised for the words which Peter had read to him, followed the banker like a holy blessing not only to the bank, but within its very walls, and even to Peter's private room. There a change of mood was destined to come upon him.

But first let us see him as he walked from house to bank. Everywhere the greetings: "Hi, Peter!" "Hey, Uncle Robert!" "Hello, Pete!" "How'r' ye, Handicap!" and so on.

Peter came opposite the church. The golden stillness of a perfect summer morning brooded over the place, brooded deeply, symbol of the fuller vision which should hereafter come. Everything that Peter saw was merely a vocable of God's thought, or else an expression of some religious form or attitude. The flowers, like himself, were worshipping: they sent up tiny perfume-prayers at all times. The winds were angels which, on viewless wings, bore divine messages to human souls. The yearning to see God, to know Him as never before he had known, became so acute to Peter Samuels that it was almost a pain. He kept repeating to himself, "God! God!

God!" and so on till he had reached and crossed the Starlight river and passed into the roaring multitude of business beyond.

Here he met, as it seemed, almost everybody and his cousin. There was the Great American Stenographer, the Great American Financier (mostly in automobiles), the Great American Scholar, the Great American Reformer, the Great American Office Holder, Bill Poster, Billiard Player, Ball Knocker, Tobacco-Chewer-and-Spitter, Dead Beat, Bum and Wobbly. There was even the Great American Ass.

He saw, for example, coming toward him, Mr. Wm. Burley. "Goin' over to the State House?" shouted Bill. "You sure got pull there. Lookin' solid as Church Rock, Pete. Yes, you are, by the great gray wolf presidin' at your doorstep."

Up comes Straight, but can't edge in a word. On runs Burley. "Heard a good one about you, Pete, just t'other day. Man says, says he: 'Pete Samuels's got lots o' flowers growin' in his yard.' Says another, 'Lots o' flowers, but not many *kinds* of 'em.' 'How so?' says the first man. 'Nothin' there but moneysuckle and the cash plant.'"

Pete laughed. He always laughed when jests derided himself. But Straight looked serious. "A little nosegay," said he, "gentlemen, if *you* please, *both* of you, from the cash plant." He went on to tell about Tony and his little girl's death, winding up: "I've paid the funeral expenses. And now Tony wants to go into the fruit business, and needs

two hundred dollars. You two come across for Tony."

Pete was already writing out a check, but Burley quizzed the doctor again and again. When he had finished extracting information, out came his own pen and book. "Here's my nosegay. It's a daisy too, as well as a cash plant." And so it was. Pete, in that one moment, admired him.

Straight admired them both. "Your bread, gentlemen, is cast upon the—"

"Adriatic," suggested Peter.

"And shall return unto you—"

"How the old atheistic devil kotes Scripter," interjected Burley.

"You, Mr. Burley, although no member of a church, I knew would not refuse," went on the doctor, likewise bantering, "because of your innate liberality and handsome appearance. While you, Peter, because of your profound sympathy with the vast flood of immigration from Southern Europe—O the Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks!"

Peter turned red. The doctor, being sleepy, did not see, but forged merrily on. "Because of your profound sympathy with the vast flood of immigration from Southern Europe—why, Pete, you are yourself a veritable product of the American melting pot—one of the products which, at present, we see little of, but a kind of foretype, a typical specimen of what hereafter is bound to be."

Then he beheld—and could have torn his tongue out. All the foolish shame of Peter at his few rich

drops of southron blood—"the Argentines, the Portuguese, and the Greeks"—flamed scarlet in his countenance. His eyes, too, blazed with a strange intensity of anger which had itself an Italian source.

But cooler bloods in the man's mixture prevailed, they and the long, strict training of business. The blaze died quickly out of the night-black eyes. "You're not really going, Straight? If it must be so, then. Come and see me, house or office—anywhere.—What is it, William?" He had seen that Burley was big with suppressed information.

"Pete," said Burley with deliberation, "I got a great idee. I thought I wouldn't tell you for a long time, but now I'm goin' to tell you. Speakin' o' that man, Tony, made me think of it. You know that all the world's a-lookin' to America to lead in everything now? Anyway, Pete, you know the old church where you an' me both worships? Well, it's gettin' kind o' rattle-trap like, an' so I got a idee to build a noo church, a whoop-up honest-to-goodness big cathedral, one that all the world can see an' be proud of. The fact I ain't a church member won't hurt—show, rather, what the world in general thinks o' religion. I got Church Rock now, but you an' me— Say, Peter, you ain't mad, Pete? You ain't goin'—"

CHAPTER IX

Ambition Recalls to Mind Win Lo

The Starlight First National was just about to open for business. The clock stood sixteen to nine. The marble lobby of the great institution, soon to be filled with throngs of customers and a babel of discordant voices, was empty now and almost silent. Yet, in the deeper recesses of the place, there was a calm, quiet activity, such as almost always precedes the opening of a large bank. There was, for example, the time-safe to get into. Six quick turns of the dial to the left, ten more to the right, three more turns in either direction, and— The chatter of falling wards and tumblers. A turn or two more. Click! Still another turn. Click-click! The big steel door, grating, stood widely ajar. Out came books and boxes, stacks and sacks and all sorts of bundles. Then these things must be properly distributed. Follows the clink of silver, the glinting of gold, the soft shuffling of new bank notes, the sweaty, tobaccoish smell of old ones, the slamming of ledgers, the rising hum of various anxious and more anxious voices. Then, suddenly—

Confusion! Somebody has discovered— Impossible! Here in the Starlight First National? No— yes— It is an ascertained and thoroughly established fact that one of the tellers is "short." Yes, decidedly short.

"No more argument, you're short." So cried Toplofty, ever-present cashier. "And we shall do the thing that is expected of us."

Now Toplofty was both the oldest and the oldest in service of all that did conduct the bank or work within it. Toplofty had even been cashier when Peter's father-in-law was president. Accurate as machinery, quite as relentless also! Tall, thin, straight, proud-stepping. His lips, like his body, were meager, and they parted so narrowly in speech that he gave an impression of talking through gritted teeth. A fine square forehead had Toplofty, but a protruding and ruthless jaw, while his small "observers," cold and blue as blue-cold ice, looked out at you and against you from under proudly arched and domineering brows.

"We shall do what will be expected. I tell you you're short."

The teller fell forward with his head on his desk.

In walked Peter Samuels.

Now, at a glance, Peter beheld that there was something much amiss. One straight look down the nave of the great building, and then— Gone were all the dreams, the visions, all the figures of speech, the lyricism and the mysticism. As punctual as stars, he was, in spite of temperament, entering his institution at the customary time—just one minute before the opening. And he saw that something was greatly amiss. Looking again, he beheld the true heart of affairs.

As he still stood, looking, he suddenly gave a joy-

ous order to the whole silent and mortified establishment. "Everybody smile!" he cried.

And everybody did smile—excepting only the culprit. Even Toplofty smiled, proudly, grimly, with much bitterness. "Mr. Samuels," he said, dignity swelling his breast, "I hope we shall do the thing that is expected."

Peter stepped elastically down the lobby like a man who hasn't a care in all the care-burdened world: Head up, big swinging steps, one hand in a pocket flapping double eagles, and with a little purring whistle in his happy throat—the faint suggestion of a sacred song.

Straight to the culprit went he, and, angel-wise, whispered: "How much?"

Came the answer.

"Gambled?"

"Yes."

"Promise?"

There was just a little interval of silence. "Yes."

"Forgiven," said Peter. He wrote his check and gave it to the culprit. "Pay me when you can."

That was a soul saved. The defaulter never forgot. He did pay. He almost starved himself to pay. And, on a time long after, in behalf of him who had saved him from desperation— But that's too fast for the tale.

Peter went into his own room—that little two by twice with a single window looking out across Dollar Avenue and into State House Square. For a moment he stood in deep contemplation, then stepped to the phone.

After a moment, "This you, Christopher?"

"This is the Secretary of State."

"This is Peter Samuels."

"I thought you'd be ringing. Yes, I sold the stock. And you—"

"Chris! Listen, Chris. I was going to build a great church out of Church Rock, build it all myself, build it for Christ. This is strictly confidential, Chris. Never tell anybody. I've told only my wife. And I can't build the church without Church Rock. Get back that stock, Chris. Get it back for heaven's sake, and sell it to me."

"You? You damned traitor!"

"Chris!"

" 'Traitor' is the word. Listen." He went on to tell of the documents which Grounch had shown him on the day before.

But Peter explained, explained with truth, with earnestness, and with great clearness of detail. The check he had sent to Sharp was to pay a mortgage on a negro church. He had asked Sharp for secrecy because he did not want to be besieged with too many applications for similar gifts. That other missive which he had sent to Sharp, that wherein he had said Muggins was "unfit for the place," that referred not to Muggins elder, but to Muggins junior—Monty, who had wanted a position of great trust, one for which Peter could no wise recommend him.

"And you refused to back my boy, my own sweet Monty?" So cried the Secretary of State, and his

voice was terrible to listen to, so full it was of frightful anger and of heartrending grief. "My Monty! My own sweet Monty! My blessed Monty!"

"I couldn't honestly," broke in Peter, after a time. "Not for *that* place!"

"Pete, you're a damned traitor. I'm glad I sold."

"And I—your friend, Chris—" Peter almost fell to reminding the Secretary of the various good offices which he, Peter, had, from time to time, performed for both father and son. But he remembered soon enough the words of Patricia. So he could not stoop, he really couldn't.

Muggins was weeping. "The last time—you interfered—with Monty—was when you—stopped—the hanging—of the nigger. Say, Samuels, what do you mean by always interfering with Monty for, with my son, Monty? Do you mean to be always interfering with him, to be always spoiling his chances?"

Pete looked round the room, at a terrible loss for that wherewith to answer. Yes, even he, Peter Samuels, was wholly and terribly at a loss. For a short time he thought he would not try to answer at all, but merely to tell Christopher Muggins to go—in the identical way wherein he was already going. But his eyes fell obliquely on a copy of the last edition of the "Revised Statutes of Starlight," there on his roller-top desk. He thought of the power which Secretaries of State hold in the simple hollows of their often very awkward hands. He did

not know— It might barely happen— Some time in the future— He might really need— It was possible— Well, he would placate Christopher Muggins.

"Chris," he said, then cleared his throat once or twice. "First of all, the 'nigger' as you call him, has consumption, and will therefore soon enough die, without any responsibility on Monty's part. Then again" (very solemnly) "you will not at all believe me, Christopher, when I say it, but Monty has always been to me—" He came near declaring "as a son," but thought of his own sweet child that had died so long ago, and could not continue.

But Chris was a little touched by Peter's very inability to go on. It seemed to him quite natural that every one should esteem his Monty, that every one should love him, that all should deeply regret the least indignity or disloyalty to that fine and perfect character. O Monty had his faults, of course, but then—these were merely bubbles on a mighty stream of character. Christopher was touched because he thought that Peter was. Nevertheless, he was not going to give in without securing, even in advance of any specific opportunity arrived, some great favor out of Peter for his son.

"Listen," he said, with great determination. "Listen. Until you have done some very great favor for my son, my Monty, you and I are only enemies. When you have done him some very great favor, then—I will consider—I—" He hesitated a moment, then "hung up."

Peter called him up again, said simply: "I promise," and placed his own receiver back on its hook.

Now Peter Samuels went to his little window and looked out on the street. How was he to placate Christopher Muggins? And how was he to build a mighty church, seeing that he had lost Church Rock? Burley, most unfortunately, had conceived the idea of building such a church and on the very same spot. He, Peter, must therefore hurry. Well, there was still the Starlight and Southeastern, thank God for that. He thought of a certain plan, pressed a button, gave orders to an emissary who responded to the pressure, and the banker once more looked out.

What a crowd was this in the roaring, whirling streets of Starlight! How cosmopolitan it all! There, in addition to "Americans," went swarms of swarthy men, of shawl-wrapped women, of cherubic, long-lashed little children. He saw a Norwegian *jente* walking hand in hand with a Greek boy. There were a Slovak and a German, an American and a Jewess.

He had ever been deeply impressed by the roaring vision as seen from his little window--this motion picture with a strangely exciting sound in it, this phantasmagoria of a gigantic American maelstrom, whereinto all the streams of earth did, sooner or later, as it appeared, disembogue and roar. A sudden inspiration came to him, almost as if a voice had spoken. "Take that for your text," said the voice. Now, on the morrow, Peter was to preach. Strangely

enough he had nearly forgotten that important fact, and had not prepared a sermon. Very well, that should be his text, "And hath made of one blood," etc. He would lay aside all foolish shame about his own mixed origin. Why indeed should he be ashamed? The English were a great commixture of many races, so had been the ancient Romans, so, probably, the ancient Greeks. Ho! what are all these people talking about?

The voices of the multitude arose continually, for the day was wearing on, and he caught strange snatches of their meaning. They demanded, promised, interrogated, admired, recanted, reasserted, conformed, reckoned; expressed fear, expressed shame, expressed doubt; accused, condemned, acquitted, disdained, flattered, despised, extolled, applauded, blessed, abused, ridiculed, yes and even prayed and cursed. And all about—the great god, money.

Nor was it only in the very precincts of this heathen temple of a bank that all this money-talk went on. Peter could hear the roaring for blocks and blocks away, and knew that in each and every block of Starlight the talk was about MONEY.

Money? Why, there in the crowd went old Avarice himself. What a face! There he went again. There, for that matter, passed other grotesque creatures—Lust, Gluttony and Drunkenness. There went also Sorrow, Sorrow and her sister Sin. There Sorrow again, and there again Sorrow. Strange how often Sorrow passed. And Ambition! Haw! What a

proud, erect, gigantic figure was Ambition, and what a dominating face he had! Huh! What? The fellow looks this way, smiles, turns toward the bank.

Feet came to Peter's door—heavy, relentless, remorseless—then a knock. But the door opened promptly, without so much as a word from Peter, and there, on the threshold—Ambition.

The figure stalked up to Peter, and, as one that long had known him, leaned over, whispering: "You can borrow on the Chinese jewels."

As he spoke, there came to Peter a picture, a vivid recollection. Years ago, as he had sat in this very room, there had entered to him an aged Chinaman, Win Lo, who, in clipped English, had said: "You know not me, Peter Samuels, who am somewhat of a mystery, but I know you. To you, therefore, do I come with a sacred trust. See, here is a box of jewels, priceless rubies." He took the stones out and exhibited them to Peter—one after another—each richly shining massy gem like a drop of veritable life-blood, equal, as it seemed, to the salvation of a million souls.

"Because of ignorance in my land, ignorance and internal strife," went on Win Lo, "this treasure must for a time be closely kept and guarded by some one of a race far different from mine own. Of all the men I know, out of all the peoples of this world, I most trust you, Peter Samuels. And there is reason for that:—I am sure you will be faithful. Hence, into your hands I do now deliver these in-

estimable jewels, a sacred charge. Take you them, and keep them truly."

Peter, at first, would not receive the stones, for he feared the responsibility, but, else, the aged man had not been satisfied. "You shall have great rewards," cried he, "if faithful, as you surely will prove. But better than rewards will be to you the knowledge of a service well done."

So Peter took the stones, and bestowed them, a vast treasure, in a safe, strong place—seven hundred and seventy stones. And each, as it were, with a little pulsing heart in its rich red center.

Said Win Lo then: "I soon must pass from earth. Me, therefore, you shall not see again. But, in his good season, there shall come to you a young man of my race, and out of one of your own universities. And he shall be entitled to the stones. And he will claim the stones of you, and you shall know that his claim is a true one in this way: He will say, 'Where are the stones? Let them be as things that were kept most sacredly both for us and for Christ.'

"Then you will give him the stones and will bless him."

And so the aged Chinaman had gone away.

But now had come this giant, overbearing fellow, and, heedless of the rights of Young China, had said: "Borrow on the stones." And Peter beheld in the vision his beautiful church again—the church whereon his whole soul was set—but, for all the beauty of the picture, and for all that never, as yet, had he completely suffered Christ to come into his

heart, he said to Ambition sourly: "Go away. Am I, a banker, and the richest and most trusted man in Starlight to turn embezzler, thief? Nay, not by any means. Besides, there are other ways to do the thing I wish."

"There are," said Ambition, "other ways. Look through the window." He himself was gone.

And Peter looked and beheld—Eph Morrison, Uncle Eph and his good wife, Liza. He laughed loud at his own forgetfulness. "I thought of this plan last night, and not again till now, when old noisy Ambition—" He pushed a button, gave an order to the little emissary that answered. Then—

In walked Liza and Eph.

And old Eph dropped to his knees and kissed Peter's hands again and again, calling him over and over his Sabyer, his Sabyer.

Then Liza, "We's done been an' bought an' paid de ol' mortgage too, offen de house, Mistuh Samuels, wid dat money you gib Eph on hangin' day." She began to cry in a shrill, howling whine, so Peter, putting a kindly hand down on her shoulder, said: "I now want *you* to help *me,* Aunt Liza, you and Eph." He went on to tell them how. Did they know William Burley? Well, William owned a controlling interest in Church Rock. Peter himself had wanted, for a very special purpose, to control that property. Burley had outgeneralled him, however, and so Peter was left in the cold.

"How *we* gwine help?"

Peter explained. "Eph here," he went on, "long, long years ago, when the Rock was worth nothing and was only considered an encumbrance on the face of the earth—Eph, I say, in those days, owned Church Rock."

"Dis hyer Eph hyer?"

"This very Eph."

Aunt Liza looked on her husband with amazement. Eph hung his head.

"That, Aunt Liza, was before Eph and you were married. Then you two married. Then Eph, reciting in the deed (though not altogether truthfully) that he still was a single man, sold Church Rock."

"He, he!" laughed the old colored man. "Wanted dat money all foh myself foh play some craps. Dat's why I said I single man."

Peter went on to Aunt Liza: "Your signature, of course, Aunt Liza, was not on that deed. But, as you and Eph lived at the time in another county, the purchasers never knew the difference. The present company, in fact, knows not the difference even now, for they never have looked the matter up outside the records."

"What diffunce am?"

"The difference, Aunt Liza, is this. Should Eph outlive you, no difference whatever. But, should you outlive Eph, then you'd own dower in Church Rock."

"Dower? What dat?"

"Dower is the one-third interest for life which any widow has in the income of any real estate which

her husband owned while he was married to her—provided, of course, that she never has signed it away. Nor can her husband deprive her of it by untrue recitals in his deed."

"Why Eph, an' you ain't nevuh done tole me! Eph got a consumption, Mistuh Samuels, and gwine die soon, ain't you Eph? Den I'll own de dowuh paht o' Church Rock. Am dat right, Mistuh Samuels?"

"Yes, Aunt Liza. But I don't want you to wait until Eph dies—if die he must—to sell me your interest in Church Rock. You can sell it now, if you want to. Strange I never thought about this matter long before, but I only lately learned the truth through Mr. Toplofty, and, ever since, I've been so busy with many things, many dreams—" He looked in the distance. "Briefly, Aunt Liza, I want you to give me a quit-claim deed to Church Rock. I will pay you well for it. Should, then, Ephraim die before you do, then I, not you, will own your dower in the property."

But Liza was on her feet. With the effusive generosity of many colored people, she seized Peter's hands, kissed them and cried over them. "O Mistuh Samuels, I don't wants no pay. Fill out dat split-claim deed. Fill 'er out, fill 'er out, an' I'll sign 'er wif my cross. A cross I'll bear my live-long days: a cross, a cross!"

Peter leaned back and laughed heartily. "Are you willing, Eph?"

"Sho willin'."

Peter went out, soon returning with a great stack of bills. "Here, Aunt Liza. You too, Uncle Eph." He had paid even Eliza more than the property could ever have been worth to her, and, of course, there was really nothing whatever due to Ephraim. But, in the hands of Peter Samuels, together with the stock which he already owned in the property and his knowledge of the place and the business—More dreams!

When the deed had been completed, and sent over to the recorder's office, and Uncle Eph and Aunt Liza had deposited their money and gone, then Peter Samuels took up his hat and stick once more, preparatory to going out. "Now for William's bank," quoth he, "and perhaps a little walk with William. Straight declares we both need exercise, that our arteries are hardening. Straight's a fool about that, but yet a little walk with Burley out in the open, free from interruption—"

He went to his window again and looked out, planning. There went all the virtues, all the vices again: Avarice, Purity, Ambition, Sorrow—Sorrow and her sister Sin. There went Sloth and Gluttony and Robbery, all three combined in one great, flabby form. No, no! Ridiculous! Why, that was Monty Muggins! All the same, however. Monty, as it happened, stopped and looked up at the banker's window; did not see Peter though, who stood in the interior dark, walked to and fro a little, and went on, came back, took as it were the very measure of the edifice, and then, with a sarcastic leer, slouched

on down the Avenue. "Likes neither me nor my building," thought Peter.

He went out into the street.

Toplofty went with him as far as the door. Peter, giving final instructions for the business of the day, wound up: "Let all, therefore, be invested to the greatest advantage." And Toplofty, as Peter moved off: "I will certainly do the thing that will be expected." Peter for a moment looked back at the building, as he always did. O the bank, the bank! *His* bank! The plans he had conceived, the means and methods whereby he had built up the business! He it was, for example, that had thought of sending to each and every new-born child in the city a savings pass-book with a credit of a dollar therein, just to start out properly the new citizen of Starlight. How that little ruse alone had doubled and trebled the business of the Starlight First National! How it had angered Bill Burley! And Patricia, how she had laughed to watch her husband's business increase!

CHAPTER X

O the Argentines, the Portuguese, and the Greeks!

Patricia, on her part, was now in the church with Elizabeth, Burley's wife. They were decorating the auditorium for the great Fourth of July sermon which Peter on the morrow (not a Sunday but a Friday) was to preach in the pastor's absence. Workmen had already draped a great glory of a flag up, far up against the ceiling, then hung beautiful strips of bunting round about the walls, and gone away. To Pat and Elizabeth remained the pleasant duty of arranging certain details. Pat, from time to time, could almost see Peter bodily in the pulpit—turning this way turning that—pathetic, humorous, thunderous, sublime—just as the occasion demanded.

"It's a very great day," Pat commented, with an air of originality and profound conviction. "The Fourth is a very great day." What she really meant was that Pete was a great orator.

"Yes, Pat," answered Elizabeth. Then suddenly and impetuously she threw her arms about Pat, and kissed her. "O Pat," she cried, "O Pat, what a way you have of doing your duty! If I were only like you, Pat!"

"Like *me!*" ejaculated Patricia in greatest surprise. "Why, Elizabeth, no one else on earth so

understands her duty or is so thoroughly devoted to it as are you yourself."

"Yes, I know. But I do my duty just because it is my duty. You do yours because you love it. You do, Patricia. There's no effort of will in the matter, or any sense of pride—"

Patricia blushed, thinking, for the fraction of a second, that possibly Elizabeth was poking fun at her. Elizabeth saw the danger signal, blushed a little herself, and went on with, as she thought, greater tact. Said she, "Do you know, Patricia, that, though it's clearly our duty to love all those foreigners coming into this land, I—somehow—I—"

"And don't you love them, and really love them just because you love them?"

"God forgive me, but I don't love them at all, Patricia. I somehow can't. O I hate them, the whole shootin' match: all 'the Argentines, the Portuguese, and the Greeks.' "

Patricia stood astounded, a great portrait of George Washington in one hand, a piece of glorious bunting in the other. "If foreigners had never come, dear Elizabeth, then there'd be no people in America today, except Indians."

"I know—the early English. They were well enough, of course. The Germans too, and the Irish. Also a *few* French. But the South of Europe—Pah!"

"Why, what's the matter with the people from the South of Europe?"

"Especially I hate the Italians. They have such dark eyes, such quick vivid faces."

"Elizabeth! Why, *Elizabeth!*"

"They'll ruin the American stock. I sometimes think it's actually our duty to hate them, not to love them."

"Why, Elizabeth! You shock me terribly. There's whole oceans of that South of Europe blood in the country already. It's bound to become a part of the composite blood of America some day—and, indeed, no matter what the immigration laws may be made hereafter."

"Hate 'em."

"Peter's part Italian." Patricia spoke in a sweet, low voice, one of quite loving idolatry. That one case should have settled Elizabeth.

"Peter! You don't mean Peter Samuels, Peter *N.* Samuels, president of the Starlight First National?"

"Peter N. Samuels, president of the Starlight First National. That's just what Peter's middle initials stand for; didn't you know that, Elizabeth? Nations. Peter's mother so named him because of his great commixture of bloods. She herself was part Italian."

"Italian!" Elizabeth only repeated the word, and stood staring. In the course of seconds, however, the expression of indignation and surprise died out, and there came in its place one of half apology. "It's the south Italians, Pat, I dread the most. Those people from the north of Italy are not so bad,

of course—Venice, Milan, Pisa, Genoa." She felt that she was displaying rather an unusual knowledge of North Italian geography.

"But Peter's mother's mother was from Naples, and one of *her* parents came from Sicily, the other from Rome. His maternal grandparents were only common immigrants," she added with a little proud smile. "And the rest of Peter's mother was part Greek and part Pole. His father's people's stock was old American—English, Irish, German and Dutch, mostly Puritan English. That father had received a rich inheritance, one beyond the very dreams of avarice itself, but he ran quickly through with it. Luxury. So Peter had to begin at the bottom, and now— Let's go over to the window there, and look out at his bank. It *is* his. It's like a great heathen temple, looking proudly across at the State House. Let's—"

But Elizabeth, being nearer the window, had preceded her. She gave suddenly a little cry of surprise and gratification. "Look! The two biggest men in Starlight!"

Patricia looked, and sure enough—William and Peter walking arm in arm. She looked again and read their very attitudes, their faces. William was all cast down, Peter triumphant. She understood. Had not Peter, on the night before, declared that he knew a way whereby to wrest from Burley the control of Church Rock? Now he had wrested it. Good old Pete! She began to see a vision of Peter's great church as if it were hard reality. She laughed.

"St. Peter's Cathedral," she named the edifice to herself. Then her blood almost froze in her veins. She looked at Elizabeth. What was this her erstwhile friend was saying?

CHAPTER XI

The Echo Wife Too Can Be a Dream Engenderer

When Peter got back to the bank, he was triumphant. Hat and stick aside, he went to the little window again. There went Glory, there Pride, there Triumph, there Splendor Eternal. There, too, Sorrow again—Sorrow and her wild faced sister. The phone rang.

Taking down the receiver, "O! *You,* Pat!"

"Yes, I've tried to get you for an hour. Peter! Peter dear! O Peter *dear!* Burley's going to build that church himself. He is—he's going to build it. I've just learned from Elizabeth. He's going to build it. He's going—"

"He'll not build it in a hurry, Pat. Don't fret."

"Why? Have you got control of Church Rock?"

"Control—or I think so."

"You *think* so?"

"Yes, I can't be perfectly sure about the whole thing yet, but I've got at least a certain hold upon a third of it. Then, too, you know the Starlight and Southeastern, how important that is?"

Pat, for some strange reason was silent.

"Pat! Pat, are you there?"

"Yes, I'm here, Peter. Pete, you foolish fellow, did you think I'd run away? Peter, I've only been thinking. That church must be built *at once.*"

"Wait till all is sure. Bill can't beat us—"

"Peter!"

Pete was astonished at the strange huskiness in her voice. "Why Pat, you're excited."

"Not excited at all. Listen, and do as I tell you. You'll be remembered forever—all your life—all of other people's lives—you'll be remembered. Pete, if all Church Rock was yours and yours now, even then could you build that church, the only kind of church you really want to build? Could you build it?"

"No," said Peter decisively. "I must have more money, much more. Nave and transepts, choir and steeples!" He seemed to Patricia to be wandering.

"How much more?"

"The Starlight and Southeastern, if I mastered that—then—then—"

There was a long silence. "But you aren't quite sure of the Starlight and Southeastern?"

"No, not quite sure of it."

"I'm not sure of it either. Rather, I'm sure you'll never get that. You'll lose what you already have of it. I don't know why I feel so. It's a woman's intuition—and—"

She was silent for a very long time, and he heard her (while he strangely wondered) breathing and gasping.

"Peter."

"Yes, Pat."

"Remember the heathen."

"I don't understand."

"The rubies—the Chinaman's rubies."

"Well, what about them?"

"We can borrow on them to build the church."

"Of course we can't do that, Pat. Why do you mention the matter?"

"*You must borrow on them, Pete.* Go to London. You are well known there, and there can pass the jewels as your own. Borrow what you want. Go ahead and build the church now, now, now. You can pay back afterward, and redeem the jewels. You can have anything you want on stones like those."

"The answer is—"

"No; go ahead, Pete. Go ahead. Think of the good you will do, right here in America—your beloved America, Pete. Think of the good."

"No."

"And before the church is up a foot, you can repay the debt, get back the jewels, and who in all Starlight will know, or care—if you are only successful?"

"Pat, you're all worn out. Go to bed. It's dark here now in the bank, and I must turn the light on and get to business. When I reach home, don't you dare let me find you up."

"Pete."

"Go."

She went. But Pete did not turn on the light. He stood for a very long time instead, gazing, gazing out through his little window. Peter was a man that knew how to stand, we may in passing say. He never lolled, or leaned, or put out finger for support on sill, or knob, or any piece of furniture. He

stood straight up on his own two legs, and looked as if he might very easily continue so to stand—erect, strong, fearless, enduring almost as Gibraltar—until the end of time. Especially since he had thought about building the great church he had forgotten fatigue. A big plan was like wine to Peter Samuels, stimulated him, filled him with phantasmagoria, took away all sense of pain, effort, danger, discouragement. He had always indeed been more or less like that. But now he had shaped the biggest plan that ever he yet had thought of. What else could he do that would so perpetuate his memory? A book might, however beautiful, however true, be left in silence and dust on the upper shelves of some library. A picture, also, might very soon be forgotten, laid aside, physically destroyed. A wonderful sonata, supposing him able to compose one, would probably soon cease to be played, and so, on earth, be heard no more. But a vast cathedral—none could escape it! There it would stand, right on the spot where he and Pat so long had worshipped, stand century after century, age after age, millenary after millenary perhaps (if the edifice were only built right) and, as long as it stood, the peoples of the various passing generations were bound to utter, one after another, those great magic syllables, so necessary to their comfort, happiness, and even salvation of soul—Peter Samuels.

When Peter at length went out, the hour was late. The city had not grown quiet, however. Starlight never did grow absolutely quiet. There was

ever a little low moaning from all the city, an undertone of pain or restlessness. People rushed to and fro also, in automobiles or on foot, and he loved this restless, restless Starlight all the more because of its restlessness. Up above, the stars were calmly shining, calmly, calmly, the ever enduring stars. Hardly anybody paid any attention to the stars. On the middle of the bridge across the Starlight river, Peter stopped and gazed into the stream. All about, from every direction, came those undertones, those wondertones, of pain, of restlessness. Where was Sorrow now, he mused. Sorrow and her sister? It almost seemed as if the noise of the city were a collective voice of all the different Sorrows and of all their wild-eyed sisters. He wondered how much sin is due to sheer restlessness, excess volition.

He kept on looking into the deep—there into the inverted, star-set dome, which seemed like heaven itself in the bosom of never-ceasing eternity, of God. Looked and looked, till his soul filled with awe and hideous fear. Then, of a sudden, he straightened up, and even spat into the river. Humming a frivolous song, one he had heard about the streets that day, he pushed across the bridge.

As he went by the Church of the Financiers, he again sang, again spat. And once more he sang—loudly, as a man that might truly have been resisting the entrance of some spirit. Frivolous words—words which, if clean, were still frivolous, set to a not bad tune. And as they passed out into the night, they lost their burden of lightness absolutely,

and became something else, the mere essence of sweet, sacred song. The refrain rolled away across the river, losing itself amongst high buildings there, and, in the opposite direction, wavered up dimmer and dimmer rows of residences, awaking children to cry to their also listening mothers—

"Mother, who is it sings in the night?"

"Hush, dear. Perchance an angel."

"Or an archangel?"

"It may be an archangel. Hush, sweet child, and only listen."

Even Straight, as he sat in his office, reading a ponderous volume on the diseases of the heart, with eyes from which the light of heavenly ideals had long passed, felt his own big heart pierced as it were by a sweet sword. A feeling of high commitment came over him, then died away. "Peter Samuels," thought he, "if only you were half as great as is your sweet song, your fine speech, you would set in the sky of life a sun that would never go down for any of us here in Starlight."

So Peter (like Pippa) passes, and his influence is felt, in a way, for good, even as he sings a song of triviality in the middle of God's night.

As he neared his own grounds he quit singing (fearing lest he awaken Patricia) and looked over the place. To him the house was not a mere pile of old-time mortar and brick. It had been Patricia's house before it had ever been his. He had bought it of her, too, and paid her a large price: he had a deep, full-bosomed pride in that. Then there were

memories clustering all about the place, memories chiefly of Pat and the fictitious childhood he had spent with her. Ho! how they had played together, they two, in the little toy house, over there where the honeysuckle grew now and the eglantine. How they two alone had captured a band of robbers near the little lake! There by the rose-bush, just before they were married, there he had uttered the earnestest prayer of all his prayerful life—that God, in His goodness, might make him worthy of Patricia.

Almost every nook and corner of the yard, for that matter, held some sweet association either with Patricia or with God. How Pat had said that the great, gorgeous magnolia tree, with its fragrant, luminous canopy, was like Peter himself. That was very good of Pat, to say that. He had always liked Pat a little better, if possible, because she had said those words. It was a great, strong, sweet-smelling, light-giving tree, was it not? Look at it now, lit up by the star-shine.

He let himself in. The house was still. Pat was asleep, and no wonder. He had kept her up the night before, and now this night, too, was already on its way to another morning. Forgetting, all at once, his care for Pat, he went out on the back porch, and began pacing with his hands behind him. After a turn or two, he thought of Pat again, re-entered the house, slipped upstairs, passed into his bedchamber, and, closing the door, threw himself across the bed.

In this position, though, he remained but a minute. Arising, he began to walk the floor this way and then that, first to the door and then to the bed, and making his turns with a nervous rapidity which told plainly he was in a state of unusual excitement.

Once he thought that he heard Pat stirring. So he undressed and went to bed. Then all the ambitions of his life came down upon him at the same time, like wild dogs throwing themselves upon a bone. Came Conscience also, and assaulted. He resisted these to the uttermost, and, at length, wishing to rid himself of the terrible contest, listened intently to the little cherished voices of the night. He heard, to wit, the various clocks in the different chambers of the house. There in the hall below, went the slow, deliberate tick-tock, tick-tock, of the ancient horologue which, on a time, had appertained to one of Patricia's great-grandparents. How solemnly it spoke of the irrevocable past! Listening further, he caught the rapid bell-like tones of the little nervous gold clock in Patricia's room. Life was a much swifter affair nowadays than in Patricia's great-grandparent's time. Then, in the distant attic, the faint far racing of a number of time-pieces: time was flying fast, fast, today, even for the servants in his house.

He heard, too, the occasional cheep of a little lonesome bird out somewhere in the trees, and the fitful whinings of a rising wind at door and window. He loved these little sounds, all of them, for they spoke the language of the Lord of sounds, but, after a

time, he began to feel a fierce rebellion against the slow, immutable march of the hours.

All through the night, though he would not admit the fact, he was thinking of the great rubies, the Chinese rubies. Over and over he saw Win Lo, and he also beheld the young Chinaman (whom, in reality, he never yet had laid his eyes upon) come and demand the jewels. And he would sometimes reply, "Here they are: take them," and again: "I have them not." In either event, he thought Christ also came to him, saying: "Hast thou, O Peter Samuels, done well?" Often, too, he answered Christ, saying: "I have indeed done well, wishing only that idle funds should be brought to light, made liquid, then invested to the greatest advantage."

But once, in the middle of his answering, here came Pat. "You, Pete Samuels! You still worrying? I wouldn't stoop to it, Peter. Aren't you tired enough to sleep?"

"No, Pat, I'm not sleepy at all. I only feel as if I ought to be but can't. It's a strange, absurd feeling, that of having neglected one's duty to get tired. O Pat, when all my plans and purposes have been completed, I'm going to go away somewhere—don't get mad, Pat—all by my little lonesome self, and then, for long days and long days, just loaf with God."

Pat was silent, as if she were vaguely feeling that Peter's expression was either irreverent to God or else disrespectful to herself. But Peter had not meant to be either disrespectful or irreverent. He

spoke again, and his voice was low and sweet with infinite yearning. "I feel the hollowness of it all, Pat, the continual striving and striving, the unbounded ambition. But, some time, I will lay it all away and go off by myself into a far, quiet place, and then, for hours and hours and hours and hours, just loaf with God. I will, Pat, I will just loaf with God."

Patricia softly rose and went out.

But immediately she came back. "You, Peter Samuels, with all your volition, unable to decide! Well, I decide for you. Borrow on the Chinese jewels. Now do it." She went to her own room.

But, for Peter, sleep, after this, was even more distant than before. A great feeling of loneliness came over him, of isolation, of apartness even from Patricia.

After a long time, or so it seemed, he arose, crept softly from his room, slipped down the padded stair, then along the hall, so to Patricia's chamber—just as any little boy has often crept downstairs to his good mother's door. But he heard Pat's deep breathing, and, having heard it for a long time and not wishing to awake her, grew ashamed of his feeling of isolation, and so went back to bed.

Still, not even then, to sleep. No, only to dream, to dream wide-waking dreams of his dear mother—that mother who, when his soul had been greatly vexed in his childhood, had sung to him sweet Italian, Greek, or Polish songs, songs she had learned from her own dear dead ancestors, songs she had sung to

Peter over and over and over and over, for a very few years of deep love, of bright light and joyous life, and then passed forever away. The clocks began, first this one then that, to strike four, thus: four, four, four, four: all over the house, all over the city.

He leaped to his feet, shot a curtain up. Thank God for another day. The stars were paling. Over on the roof, near the steeple, of the old church, went two cooing doves: Coo, coo; coo, coo. How their sweet innocent breasts glistened in the coming sunlight! In the distance roared cannon. Near by came the Gatling sound of firecrackers in a barrel. All at once a boy appeared in the street, gun in hand. Up went the gun— Bang! Down came the doves, down, down to the feet of Inherited Instinct. "Hurrah!" cried Instinct. "Hurrah for the Fourth of July!"

Peter had just been on the point of thrusting his head out of the window and then shouting, so that half the city might have heard him: "Out of one blood created He all nations of men." But, as he saw the doves fall to earth, he drew back, amazed and sick at heart, and began to dress.

After breakfast he heard old Henry singing in the garden. "Henry has forgotten," said he to Pat, "that this is a holiday."

"No," said Pat, "not forgotten. But he came up for an hour to do something to the life everlasting—I don't know what.—Peter, you look so changed of late, somehow. Why your eyes, they used to be so

wonderful, so—" She suddenly ceased talking, observing a flush of anger on his face.

At this, came out of the garden old Uncle Henry's voice:

"'Tas' Him, yes tas' Him,
An' see how sw-e-e-e-t He is."

Peter, the changeful, smiled, and went out, soon returning with life everlasting for Pat.

CHAPTER XII

Why, "Nations" Is His Middle Name: He Spake Accordingly

The church (Peter Samuels' church too) was a great sleeper. Morning, noon and evening, you could see it sleeping peacefully. Not being especially tired from any sort or kind of exhausting labors, it slept without noise. Just calmly rested—silent, silent. On Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings and nights, it suddenly woke up, and began making an infernal, celestial rather, racket—clamoring with peal after peal that its various members should come at once, *that very minute,* to be pious then and there and at least for the brief occasion.

Now, strangely enough, when the church awoke and called on and in its people, then the people themselves, who had been quite wakeful before that, got sleepy in their turn. Those same people who, the whole week round, had been insanely active and energetic, now suddenly grew almost comatose. There were those (I am told) who had even acquired the pious knack of sleeping a whole sermon through with eyes wide open.

Not a sign of sleeping, however, when Peter Samuels was to preach.

And Peter was to preach this very day.

As the hour for speaking drew nigh, the enormous old structure began to fill. Crowds and crowds, and

still more crowds and crowds. Everybody and his cousin, and the cousins' beaux and sisters. Everywhere too (was it possible?) "the Argentines, the Portuguese, and the Greeks." Toplofty (at a little distance) spoke to his wife—as they sat together in just the kind of car that might have been expected of them. Said he, "Look! A lot of dirty foreigners blocking the sidewalk."

The foreigners did not exactly mix and mingle with the Americans, even as they all entered church together. Mostly they slipped up into the gallery and out of sight. There they listened and looked, and looked and listened—down, down at the longer established people, who were moving authoritatively about on what might be called "the wealthy floor." Down on that floor, in three or four decades, these foreigners' descendants (if the old church stood so long) would be moving and smiling authoritatively about—paying little heed, too, as one may well suppose, to the unliked foreigners in the gallery.

Chief among those on the lower floor, of course, were Mr. and Mrs. Toplofty. They had the finest and most conspicuous pew, and they entered it with much condescension—as who might say, "By our very social position we are obliged to give our influence to the church. That is expected." Having entered, they said nothing for a very long while, even to each other. Then they leaned a little, each toward each, raised each a hand and softly whispered each unto each. What important things they then said has never been exactly ascertained. It

must, of course, have been the kind of thing that ought to have been expected.

Burley was present too, poor old Burley, and his dutiful Elizabeth. Burley was talking easily to her about Church Rock, Church Rock and his present controlling interest in that highly profitable institution. "I have my dues," he said. When he beheld Dr. Straight behind him, he began on Straight and told the tale all over. Straight nodded and smiled, approvingly yet calmly and scientifically, and at length congratulated Mrs. Burley on having brought up so fine a husband. "I have done my duty," admitted Elizabeth, "that is all."

Straight, like doctors generally, went seldom to church. There were reasons—so he thought. For one thing, people had a way of sickening just about church time—and that was no joke, either. If a person would sleep too late, then his turbinal bodies swelled, there was contact with the septum, and so—headache and the doctor. But there were other reasons also.

For one thing, the music. He was not a judge of music, the doctor. But he never could understand why a little man with a slim neck and light blue irides should demand in a thunderous voice a faith that could move M-O-U-N-tains. Neither could he quite perceive the necessity, when many were singing together, for not singing together.

But the worst thing was the sermons. It was not that these were not scientific. It was rather that they were. He could give any preacher cards and

spades on science, and then defeat him easily. He recalled the time when a very young preacher in another church had preached on evolution—no doubt for his, the doctor's, very particular benefit, for the minister had phoned to him specially to come that day and hear the sermon. Straight had always been an evolutionist and the sermon strongly favored evolution, but, from that time onward, Straight was not so certain that he was an evolutionist.

He went to church (if at all) to get (if possible) religion. And what did he get? Generally, diluted (and very much diluted) ethics. Sometimes not even that. He had listened to a sermon recently, wherein it was baldly stated that the religion of the generation just now passing would not do as the religion of today. "Nobody takes the Bible seriously any longer," said the broad-minded divine who had expressed that opinion. About six months ago he had listened to a preacher who was not a Mormon commending both Mormonism and free love. At one of the recent meetings in a parish house (or so he had been informed) young ladies of the church had danced with legs and thighs stark naked almost to their bodies. And the minister had approved—whereby he had got front page next day for nothing.

It had all come from taking people into church about in the same way as an agent would get up a club for a good magazine—or a bad one. No conviction necessary. No conversion. Anybody welcome. "Just as I am," sure enough. "Whosoever will," with an astounding vengeance. The

slogan appeared to be, "With Christ or without." The church was full of atheists now, and they controlled. He recalled a column in a recent religious weekly, wherein, with great brassy blowing of editorial trumpets, enormous numbers of so-called "additions" to various churches were announced, together with hundreds and thousands of dollars collected for church gymnasiums, swimming pools, marble smoking apartments, and, he did not know, but silver cuspidors. He recalled old Burley's gold toothpick with its diamond at one end. Why not a cross for a toothpick? The long end of the cross could be sharpened for insertion between the teeth, and the short end set with almost anything that was sufficiently expensive.

O that many ministers might hear also, in addition to the sound of their own sweet voices, the silent sermons which, each Sunday, are avalanched at the pulpit, in vehement imagination, from some of the placid-seeming seats. What a change were there then in spoken sermons! People complain at the strictness of the Gospels! They ask for something easier than Christ! Yet, all the while, in the stillness of their hearts, they know that He and He only is "the way, the truth and the life."

How often had the doctor not come to church in the days when he was young and more deeply interested, wishing to have all doubts dispelled, but only to go away with these very much increased and darkened, and new ones—very terrible new ones—added unto them. "Life!" he had cried,

silently. "Give me life!" But he had got in return only death, spiritual death—not medicine, but poison.

There was singing now. He had been lost in reflection, and so had not known when it began. It was a little better than usual, he believed. But that might have been because Peter Samuels was going to preach this day. Coming events cast their glories before. He liked the preaching of Peter Samuels. He had heard professional ministers preach, out of whose eyes had died the light of Christ long years ago, heard them uttering words of naked and unabashed disbelief, words and thoughts that were harder and colder than iron. But Peter knew that religion is emotion, worship. His sermons were full of truest thoughts, but his thoughts were ever menstruums, mere vehicles for the transmission into human hearts of a most sublime devotion—a human love of man, a divine love of Christ. Yet, too, Peter's preaching had never quite convinced him, Dr. Straight. It had always seemed as if Peter were keeping something back—not from the multitude, perhaps, but from him, the doctor. Doctors had to learn the human heart. So they knew when secrets were being held back.

As he thought of the multitude, Straight looked up into the gallery. There sat Tony, front row, middle seat, his dark round head, like a restless apple, rolling and rolling just above the gallery rail. He knew all about Tony. Tony had come to America an atheist and a bad man. Now he was a

member of the mission in "Dagotown," and a coming citizen. Peter had done all that, Peter with his clear insight into the human breast. Peter should have been a doctor—no, a minister. Even at that, he should have to be changed somewhat. There he came now.

Peter left Patricia in her pew. As he started for the platform, the church rang, in spite of the fact that it was a church, in joyous praise of Peter Samuels. Patricia did not stoop to notice the applause, but Peter turned, grinned, bowed, looked up into the galleries, and, seeing there Tony and his friends, mostly workers in the Church Rock quarries, said a few staccato words in sweet Italian. Some one jumped up then, there in the gallery, and, in spite of himself, shouted: "Zeeto ee Ellas! Zeeto ee Amerikee!" "Zeeto!" responded Peter with all his might. "Hurrah for Greece and for America! Hurrah for all the peoples, for 'of one blood created He all nations of men!'" In such unconventional fashion, and somewhat inexactly, was announced the text.

He went up to the platform with success already won. And how he talked that day. How he told the story of the whole world in the days before Columbus in half a dozen wondrous sentences. Then—America! How sweet the story, as Peter Samuels told it! Old as it was, it seemed new again and strangely, strangely beautiful, like the new-old blossoming of spring when the hardships of the winter are gone.

Out of one blood created He all nations of men, and now, in America, all these bloods were coming together to mingle once more. Here, in time, there would be again one great single blood, whose destiny—

He peered far off, intending a theatrical, or, rather, a dramatic effect. But his plan was frustrated. The spirit of the Lord came down upon him, and seized him, and would have spoken with his very lips. But the fearless one grew very fearful. He shuddered and turned pale, and drops of dew stood out upon his forehead. For Peter N. Samuels would not suffer the Lord that He should come in wholly and without limitation to the innermost parts of his soul. Then a dreadful thing happened. Peter put out a hand blindly, tried to walk, failed, stopped, staggered, fell down on the platform. He that had always stood up strongly on his own two pillar-like legs—stood, like a magnolia, without a trace of effort—he was down and grovelling.

The lower parts of him were paralyzed, or appeared so to be. He seemed not to feel them at all. They were numb absolutely.

Straight was by his side in a moment, but not before Patricia.

The house was in commotion.

"Paralysis," said Straight. "Peter, I all along expected this."

Then, of a sudden, Peter N. Samuels did an astounding thing. He stood straight up from the floor, and rejected all assistance. He wiped his face

with a handkerchief, and then, by sheer volition, apologized. "An awkward thing," he said, in a clear, bright voice. Then motioned Patricia and the doctor away. "I looked not where I was walking, good citizens. America, too. She also must look where she walks. Else she too will fall, some day." And he expanded that little figure into a quaint, sweet allegory, which, because it came from the man's own heart, so touched the hearts of all that many of the people were in tears.

Poor Tony laid his head on the rail and shook hard. The Greek beside him attempted to say "Zeeto!" but miserably failed, and sobbed also. Tony, on his part, did not show his tear-stained face again till the sermon was finished.

Peter made, at last, a peroration out of our duty, religious and material, to the rest of the world. God had blessed us more abundantly than any of the other nations. What should we do in return? He made it clear that we ought to relieve physical want and woe wheresoever and whensoever the various peoples were not able to relieve it themselves—and not further. More than that, and far above all that, we owed them Christ. Not so much to the countries of Europe did we owe it to teach Christ. These nations had had their chance, he said. No one could compel either a land or an individual to accept what he did not want. But what of the teeming millions who had never heard of the Savior? He pictured their distresses, their necessary heartaches, their darknesses of soul. Especially, he knew about

Africa, he said. So he told them most about Africa, stepping straight and strong down the little stair from the platform as he kept on talking, and, at last, standing by the door of his own pew, to speak the last sweet words.

To speak them? No, to sing them, to pass them like veritable waves of emotion into the hearts of his hearers. As he sang, it did not seem inappropriate that Peter N. Samuels should do this. It was all so natural, so democratic, so a perfect matter of course.

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,"

and so on. The last words died softly and imperceptibly into the benediction. And not a soul but was blessed that had heard that voice that day.

At first, when the speaking was over, the people stood silent and awed, then began to leave the building softly—the last stiff song of the choir, although it was on the printed programs, absolutely forgotten. The choir itself had forgotten it. Then the audience hesitated, turned, rushed with outstretched hands toward Peter Nations Samuels, veritable man of God. Spite of the handshakings and congratulations, Patricia managed to get to Peter again, for they had swept him away from her, and to seize his left arm. This she squeezed tightly with both her own, as if to say to the world: "So much, at least, is mine." They made their way then, Pat and Pete, together, very slowly, to the outside of the

church. There dozens and dozens more were waiting to get a word at Peter.

Poor Tony and the Greek had slipped silently off, each fearful lest he give offense by forwardness. From the back door of the basement, underneath the rapidly emptying church, had crept, too, an old bent colored man. Having softly closed the basement door, he put his hands together in front of his black, bony face, and gently hummed: "Tas' de Lord! Yes, tas' Him! Mistah Samuels, too, gwine save Africa!"

And Tony, poor Tony, as he went away, strange thoughts were filling his mind. He had in the inner pocket of his pea-green jacket a slim, bright stiletto—carefully kept for the benefit of a certain Irishman who had been his enemy for years. As the Italian reached the middle of the bridge across the river, he took the dagger from his bosom and threw it afar from him into the deep, dark middle of the stream.

CHAPTER XIII

The Weakness of Strength

Meanwhile, the most effusive of the complimenters, there on the grass plot in front of the Samuels church were Mr. and Mrs. Burley. Patricia had endeavored to talk to Peter about his mishap on the stage, but Peter proving resentful and saying it was only a slip of the feet, she let the Burleys have him to their own assertively conversational selves.

"Why, Peter," Burley cried, "you just now shot off the very best speech of your life. How *could* you think of all them things to say? And so beautiful, every one! Like a wonderful, wonderful lark, you were, that soars and soars and sings and sings."

Pete looked up in amazement, the praise was so frank, so ungrudging. Then he caught in Burley's eye that which did not altogether please. "I'm admirous of you, Pete. Come, Elizabeth, let's you and I go across the street to Peter's house, 'fore we go 'cross the avenue to our own." He stopped. "Hark!" He put hand to ear, listening intent. Then he went softly on again. "No. Impossible. Thought for a moment it might be the great gray wolf at your doorstep. But *he's dead.*"

Peter made no reply, and, as they all reached the corner of "The Shanty" yard, Burley added: "That quit-claim deed which you got from old Aunt Eliza

sho' done killed him." He uttered a peal of hearty laughter, which appeared to be so genuine that it seemed to Peter insincere.

But, turning, Peter beheld a surprising quality in the facial expression of his rival—good fellowship, friendship. Actually! So Burley was really man enough to enjoy, truly to enjoy, his, Peter's shrewd move in the matter of securing a controlling interest in Church Rock. He reached out to Burley a cordial hand. "Congratulate me," he invited.

Burley did, with great magnificence and ungrammatical prolixity. He wound up, however: "And so, Pete, seein's you've been so cute and all that—brilliant business man, you know—it's really a terrible shame to tell you, but I reckon I got to. Why—facts is, that that there old nigger wench didn't have no dower to sell."

Peter looked at his rival in very great glee. It did not even occur to him that Burley was doing anything else than trying to tease him because of his great success. So sure was Peter that this was Burley's idea in what he now was saying, that he set up hand to ear himself, after the recent fashion of Mr. Burley, and, in a ridiculous whining tone intended to amuse Pat (which it did) shrilled: "The wolf! The wolf! Good people, I hear the gaunt gray wolf!"

But Burley went on. "No jokin', Pete. Eph was really never married to Eliza. Had a first wife livin' when he puhtended to marry 'er—though Aunt Eliza never knowed that."

Peter turned a Pompeiian red. "What a shameful lie," he shouted, "is this? What pitiful—" He could speak no more.

"Steady, Pete," soothed William. The fellow actually went and took in his clumsy fingers the great Knight Templar seal which hung from Peter's vest. "Say, Pete," he implored, "in case you ever need to pawn this, let me know. Won't you *please?*"

Still Peter could not speak. Burley continued. " 'Sides all that, Pete [fingering the charm yet more curiously and appraisingly] 'sides all that, Aunt Eliza died last night."

This was too much. Peter did not believe a word of the tale. Yet, still, he could not quite speak, and, had he been able to talk volumes, he would not have trusted his voice.

So Burley, further: "Aunt Eliza was out at a neighbor's, merry-makin' last night. Somebody said something joyful, and Aunty laid back her head and hollered. That sublime ha-ha was her last."

"Dead!" cried Peter, in a grave voice. He began to see that Burley, spite of his nonsense, might be speaking truth.

"Dead," repeated Burley, calmly. He relinquished the watch-charm. There was something too strangely august in the manner wherein Peter had spoken the word, "dead."

"Dead," said Burley again, nodding.

"Best of women," intoned Peter. "Poor old Aunt Eliza. Toil and poverty were her lot—toil and

poverty and inappreciation—life behind the veil."

Pat and Elizabeth turned away their heads.

"That's all well enough," resumed Burley. "And I hope she's in heaven. Also, let's never get old Eph pinched for bigamy. But the point is that she ain't never had, and she now ain't never goin' to get, no dower. Even if Morrison's first wife should die, they couldn't be no common-law marriage with Eliza established, ner nuthin' to put dower in a dead woman. Pete, you spent your money for zero. Hereafter, hire a lawyer—a better one, I mean." He knew as well as Peter that no lawyer on earth could have kept Aunt Eliza from dying, also that Ephraim's first marriage, if recorded at all, was not recorded in the Starlight records. But William had a good chance to taunt Peter on his knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the law, so he took it. He repeated, "Pete, you spent your money for zero. You ought to had a lawyer."

"Perhaps as far as Church Rock is concerned," admitted Samuels. "But thank God poor old Aunt Eliza was rich for at least a little time before she died. Pat, I'm upset. No lunch this day—don't wait for me. I'm going to the bank."

He walked slowly across the street with Burley and his wife, still talking of the virtues of poor Aunt Liza. To Burley his entire conduct in this matter seemed like a farce, a pose, a mask assumed to disguise chagrin over the loss of dower in Church Rock. But Peter was not posing. He understood too well the value of a character like that of poor, old Aunt

Liza. Always good, sweet, kind, self-sacrificing! What were the accomplishments mere ambition could show, compared with the myriads of humble kindnesses performed by people like Aunt Liza? Thank God, the poor black body had died not in pain but in laughter—the great, hearty laughter of her breed, her race.

But when Peter reached the bank, and entered his little room therein, a strangely different mood came over him. The nightwatchman (already on duty—how was that?) came and knocked at his door, and, at Peter's harsh word bidding him come, thrust in his head a little, and, smiling, inquired if there was anything at all that he could do for Peter Samuels. "No!" shouted Peter, and the door closed and not so much as a soft retreating footstep could be heard beyond it.

How Peter, in that hour, hated the nightwatchman, hated Bill Burley, hated the bigamist, Morrison. Why had he not let Morrison die by the rope, that day when Peter had merely got himself the eternal enmity of Monty Muggins and the Secretary of State? Let him see! Old crass Bill, he would beat Bill yet. The Starlight and Southeastern was paying huge dividends now, owing largely to the sage advice and stratagems of him, Peter Samuels. And shortly, Peter would have a controlling interest in that road. Then—success! He stood for a long time in contemplation. Who were there that dared resist him? His hot Latin blood boiled, and the colder Puritan blood was actually boiling with it.

Still—he would do it all for Christ! Yes, he would do it for Christ! Nevertheless, if he wanted to do it just a little for Peter N. Samuels—what harm in that? Last, and very far from least, he would do it just to show that he could do it. But—could he do the thing he wished merely on the strength of the Starlight and Southeastern?

He folded his arms and looked steadily for a long time and at the face of the wall over his roller-top desk. Voices began to reach him from the street. "They told us," said a very husky one, "that as soon as saloons went away there'd be no more necessity for charity. Now look! Bigger drives than ever. You'd think, the way they beg—" Peter could hear no more. Then another voice: "It's just because of the twenty-five per cent the solicitors get, the reason they keep on. One of my neighbor's girls makes twenty-five to fifty dollars a day on every drive. No wonder they keep driving." A great crashing motor bus stormed by. When it had passed into the general uproar, yet another voice was exclaiming: "We need more money for the schools. Look how they done in Dayton, Ohio. Every boy and girl in high school there's got to go swimmin' before school takes up. And each and every girl's given her own individual dressin' room an' her own individual seventy-five dollar electric hair-dryer. Some inducement, *that* school." "What do they do for the *in*side er their heads?" asked a coarsely complaining tone. By all the gods, it was Burley's!

Peter stepped to the window. The other speaker was a dealer in electrical supplies.

Peter stepped back and gazed at the wall again. "Dollars! Dollars! That was what everybody was talking about, thinking about. And this the Fourth of July!" He looked all round the room, went and tried the door to see if it was latched. It was latched, and he locked it. He remembered that fact long afterwards, remembered it indeed all the rest of his life.

The phone rang. He answered. Pat was talking. "Peter! Dear Peter!" she cried, in fearful agony. "Peter, do not let them defeat you, dear. Dear Peter. Peter, do you hear me?"

"Yes, Pat, very well."

"Then go right on, Peter dear, down to the safety vault, and open the drawer there."

"The drawer I put the Chinese jewels in?"

"Yes. The jewels of Win Lo. You said, Peter, that Win Lo told you, when he gave the jewels to you in trust, that you were never, never, never to remove them from that very drawer out of any cause conceivable. But what do we care for that?"

"What do we care? I am not going down."

Patricia seemed dumbfounded. Was this Peter, Peter who had always been so obedient to her every wish? She did not speak again for a considerable time. Then she inquired, "Are you there still, Pete?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean what you say?"

"Yes, yes. I do sincerely mean it. I meant it long before now, too. It would be impossible, you know, for even the president of this or of any other bank to get into so much as his own private box today or on any holiday—or at any time whatever, except in company with the regular attendant for the purpose. But, several days ago, I took the attendant with me to the vault, and, opening the drawer, took out the casket in which the stones lay, and put it in my pocket. The attendant did not in the least know what was in the casket. He did not even understand that the drawer was Win Lo's. Of course he didn't. The drawer has always stood in my name. Yet it was really Win Lo's, and I had promised Win Lo. I had really promised him."

Peter was silent for a long time, then went on. "So I brought up the jewels here, here to my little room, here where I had a place for such valuables. The sharpest crook in Christendom couldn't find that spot in ages."

"And so the jewels are there by you even now!" Her voice was quivering with emotion, with doubt. Poor Pat!

Peter looked about the room before he answered. He seemed to be changing his mind about something. "Pat, be still. I have already taken the jewels, I tell you. And I shall borrow on them too. I have already taken them (do you not understand?) from the place where I promised to keep them always for their owner. They are taken. Be quiet. They are already taken."

"You might later put them back."

"Yes, but I won't. I'm not built that way. I have taken the stones, 'converted' them, as a lawyer would probably express it. And now, Pat, I believe you have talked enough. Lie down, and don't wait for me at all." He hung up the receiver.

He went near the place in the wall at which he had been so steadily looking a minute or two before, put a hand behind a picture frame, and, after a moment's manipulation, watched a small square of the wall turn out toward him on silent hinges. In the recess so made stood a panel of dull steel with a black knob in its center. A few turns of the knob, and the drawer pulled out. Peter had not really, when he had taken the jewels from the safety vault, intended to keep them out. He had meant merely to have them near him so that, from time to time, he could see them and gloat over them. But now, now that Patricia had become so obdurate, so excitedly and fiercely insistent, he had all of a sudden decided to inform her that the jewels had already been taken with felonious intent and that all which now remained was the mere act of borrowing on them.

He put his hand into the drawer, and brought forth the necklace, looked all round the room again. Then he studied the rubies with attentive care.

So he continued to stand and to study till the sun went down, and the stars above the State House dome began peering through his little window and into his unlighted room.

He laid the rubies on the roller-top desk, and went and stood at the window as he had done so often before when engaged in contemplation. Out on the sidewalk men and women were still thronging by—men and women fuming about their petty affairs; living out their brief existences under the eternal stars, shining on, shining on. He wondered, wondered.

There, too, along the sidewalk, went again all the virtues, all the vices: Purity, Self-sacrifice, Humility; Avarice, Pride, Ambition; all the rest. There went Robbery—Robbery, Gluttony and Lust, all in one huge person combined. Again Ambition! What a ruthless, a king-like tread! After all, people needed kings (did they not?) kings of finance, kings of religion—

He started a little, thinking he had heard a step at his door, a tinkering at his lock.

He turned and faced the black room. For a time, after the bright lights of the sidewalk, he saw nothing at all. Then shapes began to manifest themselves. There was the table, a very dim table. There the chair, a very dim chair. Over yonder—a somewhat plainer shape—was the roller-top desk. On top of the desk he had placed—

A great towering shape detached itself from the blurry outlines of the desk, and moved toward him.

His eyes were getting accustomed to the darkness now, and he saw plainly enough before him the figure of a large man with a mask on its face. Behind this man appeared to be another.

As the first of the figures approached within what seemed to be his reach, Peter suddenly put forth his hand, and tore the mask off.

Then he felt something strike him—first in the pit of the stomach; next, over the heart. For a moment, he saw almost with preternatural clearness, the features he had so suddenly exposed. A strange, venomous-looking face: lower jaw stuck well out; hot, unwinking eyes; low, flat forehead. The stretched neck and flattened head reminded him of those of a serpent about to strike.

All these details were photographed on the sensitive plates of his brain. Of a sudden he felt a strange nausea. He nevertheless lunged forward, as well as he could, and tore off the mask from the second intruder.

CHAPTER XIV

The Man That Was Like a Magnolia Tree

When he awoke, he found himself lying on the floor of the little room, quite alone. He attempted to get up, but again fainted. When he came to once more, he did not try to rise, but, feeling a great pain in the stomach, slipped one hand to the afflicted place. No wound there. Then on up to the region of the heart. Here he discovered a large round swelling with a little hole in its center. His clothes were soaked with blood, and there was clotted blood, as he could plainly feel, all round him on the floor. He had, then, received a blow of the fist in the solar plexus, and, afterward, the thrust of a dagger at his heart. He felt of the dagger wound again, and could easily make the track out, where, between skin and rib, the blade of the dagger had slid along—wounding certain vessels, it is true, but not reaching the heart.

The phone rang. He dared not answer. After a time it rang again, and still he could not get up, or speak with sufficient distinctness had he been able to arise. Some one came and knocked at the door. The watchman, no doubt. "Are you there, Mr. Samuels?" Peter did his utmost to speak, but could not force out a syllable. He began to be consumed by thirst. Then he wandered in hot deserts, fearfully unwatered jungles. Why did no one bring him

water? No one? Why, some one did—Patricia—Patricia was giving him water. He was lying in Patricia's bedroom. She was waiting on him. He fainted once again, but, when next he awoke, he could speak a word or two.

"What day is it?"

"Monday noon. Be quiet."

Peter reflected. Three whole days gone without his knowledge. He must have been hurt rather seriously.

"Have they caught the robbers?"

"No. They do not even know who the robbers were. The watchman neither saw nor heard them, either as they came or went. You had spoken harshly to him, he said, and he had stepped out into the street. The building was entered by the rear."

For a time Peter lay with his eyes closed and very quiet. Then, as his strength returned, he told Pat what he knew.

That afternoon, by permission of Straight, he sat up for a while, and, next morning, was visited by a Pinkerton man, whom he strangely enough put off without the slightest information. Then by Mr. Toplofty—that was to be expected. Last by Christopher Muggins, who requested Pat to leave the room to him and Peter for a while. Poor old Chris! How frail and feeble he seemed! A three-day stubble stood out on his face, and it was all like white frost. Black, veiny pockets depended from beneath his eyes. He stated all his trouble to Peter, who, thereupon,

reminded him: "I have already promised. Merely say nothing, and let me be."

When Chris had gone, Pete of a sudden arose, dressed himself, and cried out to Pat, who had gone into the kitchen: "Pat! A plan! A plan!"

Pat came running, and, before she had had a chance to expostulate with him on getting up too soon, he had told her all his project.

Then he hurried to his room and began packing.

When Peter had started to run down the walk to the taxi, Patricia, standing on the porch, felt that she should always hear in her heart those retreating footsteps. They grew louder and louder, even as they became more distant, louder than anything else in all the great city roar. Down the walk, down the walk, out to the street—then off. She saw Peter waving good-bye, raised her own tiny hand a little, just to be courageous, you know, then turned, sobbing, back into the house.

And yet, in a way, she was too, strangely enough, relieved by Peter's departure. Peter had been somehow so different of late, so different! Not at all like Peter.

After a time of sobbing she began looking into the yard once more.

What a magnificent spectacle was the great magnolia! She went again out and stood beneath the tree, murmuring little foolish things to it.

CHAPTER XV

Now He Seeth in a Dark and Yet Clear Glass

Peter, on his part, was soon in his Pullman stateroom, laughing. He had met Dr. Straight in the lobby of the station, and that disciple of generations of undemonstrative scientists had suddenly thrown up both his hands and opened his eyes to their widest extent. "You!" he cried, harshly. "You—you fool!"

"Still, you gave me good results," responded Peter. And away he sped, laughing, and barely caught his train.

He was, to tell the truth, a trifle weak still, and he lay on the side-bed of his stateroom for a good half hour, panting and with his eyes shut. Then he turned his head and directed his vision to the outdoors.

They were speeding across what seemed to be a plain of limitless extent. He was sharply and a little disagreeably surprised by the acute sense of loneliness which suddenly possessed him. Patricia!

He arose, re-arranged his hair, and went into the main room of the coach. There he looked about for a time, seeking the companionship he so greatly loved. There were, however, only women in the car, excepting one great obese man, who lay in a backward-riding seat with his feet in his forward-

riding other, hard at work snoring. Not a passenger was known to Peter. However, he felt more comfortable here than in the narrow isolation of his stateroom. So he took a position on the right side of the train, and, having tried ineffectually for a very long time to catch a glimpse of Starlight smoke, turned his dreaming eyes forward.

He sped along, break-neck. Things flung past him as in high dudgeon. Hideous five-wire fences raced eternally by, like harps of infinite stringing and no music. And then the wires up above! It came upon him that the manifold and oft-repeated cross-trees of the telegraph made multiple Golgothas, like a series of symbols stretching round the great world. He was a little touched, as well as proud, because he had thought of that likeness. There must be singing up there, among those trees and wires—singing sweet, sacred, mournful. Yet he heard it not for the noise of the onrushing train.

At all events, music or no music, the delightful madness of motion belonged to Peter Samuels. Motion, motion; swifter, swifter, swifter yet again. Ah, entrancing American madness! Grand to be going—somewhere. But what of the final journey, the last, long resting place? Or could there be any ultimate resting place for Americans?

Thus he moralized and symbolized, sometimes whimsically, sometimes in earnest, and always in the confusion of a great excitement. The long journey before him had aroused his imagination—let us say his fancy.

The train stopped for water, started again—making giant rhythms, as it sledge-struck and sledge-struck and sledge-struck the riveted ends of the rails. How the pulses in his temples beat with the echoing iron; the poles flitting by, each a manifold cross with messages to many. Speed, speed, O messages of the manifold cross-trees. Take ye up and pass ever onward the one great message of the one single cross. He would use these metaphors in a Sunday school speech some day.

He looked ahead, whenever he could, down the long track, always wide where the train ran, narrowing down to a long straight line which, very far away, appeared to lead to heaven. He would use that likeness also.

"O the supreme joy of riding on a swift train!" mused Peter. "Is there any American business man in Maine or New Mexico that does not feel the delight? Insane exhilaration from being carried along at a kind of immense profit in the way of motion! You sit so easy, so comfortable, yet—owing to the efforts of others—you are whisked away (as if you were a mere feather) over hill, over dale, over rich, teeming pastures, through the profitable fields, through the profitable villages, past profitable factories and banks again. A feeling of facile power in it all, a sense of much progress without work. You could never have done this wonderful thing by your own mere legs. Not even by the legs alone of thousands of other people could you have performed this miracle of an advance. You do it, in a way, by

your brain—by your brain, that is, plus legs and arms and hands and backs of myriads of other people, whose arms and backs and hands—yea and heads and hearts and very souls also—you own and control by the eagles that lie in your pocket. O little disks of magic strength, what a consolation ye are!

"How the farms swim by, farms worth fifty and sixty and a hundred and a hundred and fifty an acre. Power! How the houses and the barns and the haycocks cry out, 'Power!' How the villages and the cities scream, 'Power!' They are all potentially mine, too, for I have disks in my pocket, magic, magic disks. And I have the magic brains withal, wherewith to attract more disks. Power, power, power! All things shall exalt me, and nothing shall set me down."

They had stopped at a mere village, and were pulling out again. Not far from the depot was a bank, and, yet a little farther, in a park of oak trees, but still in sight and touch of money and transportation, an old court house, lifting its plastered columns with a suggestion of the calm of classic beauty and Roman law. Farther away stood a church.

Slowly the scene glided by. For a moment a barred jail broke on Peter's sight, silent and with deep, hidden menace to all who did not infringe the laws of their country in a perfectly proper way. Brilliantly illuminated by four arc-lights it was, thus early in the evening: one at each corner of its high-fenced yard. For half a dozen seconds the scene

burned into Peter's mind, then it, too, slid into the rear darkness—just as all merely human matters will, sooner or later, slide.

Peter raised his inner window, and, through the screen in the outer, sniffed the keen sweet evening air with its rich scents of clover and corn. Then he glanced down the curving, glowing track.

Through the shifting lights and shadows of the great fields he sped. Now into a patch of dark woods. Now into a broad, twilighted plain. Now again into a deep cut with the view shut out by curving banks of yellow and deeply wrinkled clay. Into a tunnel and out again, out into cloud-dappled sunset hues.

The clouds grew thicker and night came swiftly down. He saw, ever and again, a tiny light in some far-away dwelling—a home whose occupants he would never know. And the fact that he would never meet them, never share their joys or sorrows, smote him like a physical pain. Then he was proud a little, because he believed that the most of American business men were not quite so sensitive as he, not altogether so susceptible to high and humane feeling. Under all his sensations, all his thoughts and emotions—even his pride—lay, like a solid, a deeply buried, rock, the great substratum of his purpose on this journey.

The train curved, a great blaze ran out of the locomotive smoke-stack. All at once Peter became aware again of the endless succession of Golgothas, all linked together by ligaments of wire. The world

was full of Golgothas, he thought, each man, each child, had one. And each and every Golgotha is bound inseparably to each and all the others. O world of Golgothas! Well enough, in such a world, that Some One from above had come down to show us—

The light from the engine died, the Golgothas vanished. Then from the dead-black sky came a sudden shimmer of light—again the leaning Golgothas. "Light or darkness, the Golgothas were present all the same," thought Peter. "There is no use trying to escape Golgotha. Seen or unseen, it is ever with us. And who indeed would wish to escape it?" He quoted from Knowles:

> " 'Our crosses are hewn from different trees,
> But we all must have our Calvaries.
> We may climb the hill from a different side,
> But each must go up to be crucified.' "

The train stopped again. He went into the dining car, and, as long as he ate, the train stood stock still. He could scarcely resist the impression that it had waited all that while for his sole convenience in eating.

Having finished, he returned to his place in the main room of the Pullman.

The train was still at a stand. In the very moment when he again sat, it uttered a shriek of warning, likewise of power and commercial triumph. Lightning flashed—an electric light indeed, and he saw a near by cemetery. Wholly unexpected, a sharp,

ironical echo of the whistle started up from among the graves, and then came a peal of doom-like thunder.

The train moved on. What an improvement a train was, for example, over the old stage-coach, as that too had been over the horse, and as these, in their turn, had been over man's unaided legs. Out in the darkness there, as he knew, still remained, in numerous places, concrete relics of the various stages through which architecture, too, had passed in this short-historied land of ours. He had noticed, all afternoon, in many spots, the old, old log cabin—two separate four-walled buildings with a long, long open-front porch between. Then, next, the little weather-beaten frame house. Finally, the big, two-story somewhat palatial structure, with a three-cell garage behind it. What next would the years produce in the way of country buildings? All the structures, to his vivid imagination, symbolized corresponding changes which had been going on in men's minds. "Build thee," he said to himself, "more stately mansions, O my soul! Most of all, mansions for God— I will use that too."

Just at this moment, Ben, the negro porter, came by. Peter's ticket had long ago been surrendered to an obsequious conductor, but Ben cried briskly and with an authoritative air: "Ticket! Ticket, sir!" Encouraged by Peter's prompt smile, as well as by a former residence in Starlight, the negro continued: "Cunnel," said he, "Cunnel, what dat dar

middle initial of yourn done stan' for—dat dar 'N'?"

Peter's soul, as usual at such times, flared for a moment volcanically. "Well, it doesn't stand for 'Negro'," he started to say; but, thinking of the deep offense which such an answer would necessarily give to a harmless and sensitive person, he answered, recalling Burley (and, besides, wishing, if he could, to seem humble): "It stands, Ben, for 'Nothing.' My middle name is 'Nothing,' because that's what I started business with—just nothing."

Ben, seeing Peter start to take the screen from his window, took it out for him, then let both the windows down.

"Peers like," responded Ben, when he had finished the task, "dat in dat case, 'Nothin' ' better been yore *first* name. Anyhow it ain't goin' to be your *last* one, judgin' by de iron set o' yo jaw, sah!" He moved on, pleased with the repartee, but Peter had not quite caught his meaning.

The banker still sat for a time, trying to discover, in the solid wall of darkness, just outside his window, some or another indication of human residence, human existence. There was nothing at all to be seen, however, but an unchanging ebony wall, tight and flat against his outer pane. After a time he became aware of a strange-looking face painted in the deeps of the darkness—a gaunt, grim, pitiless face, the face of a king, a tyrant. Whose features were those? Heavily shaded eyes, destructive mouth, strongly set, hard-muscled jaw. Odd that he had not

observed this fearsome countenance when first it had come into the car! He turned a little to examine the reflection still more closely, and found, as he moved—that the face, moving also—was his very own.

So this, then, was the way he now was looking! For all his upper stratum of high, sweet feeling, there lay, beneath—just this. In moments of relaxation, the deeper self rose to the surface and would be declared to the world.

Peter got up, went into his stateroom, banged the door to, took off his coat. "I shall have to watch *that* face hereafter," he thought, as he put the coat on a hanger, "keep it pushed down out of sight."

He undressed, lay on the lower berth, close by the window, and shortly was asleep.

But soon awoke. He had had a distressing dream. He had thought, namely, that Patricia, Burley, Uncle Henry, and even Straight had all been marching round about him, pointing accusing forefingers and exclaiming harshly. Straight had said, "Almost thou didst persuade me." Uncle Henry, "O thou couldst have rent the veil!" Burley, "I have fought you and shall always fight, but once (though I would not have admitted the truth) you were my ideal, and were leading me upward." Then Pat, even Pat: "I saw God through you; but you, my husband, you have failed me, failed me miserably." Then had come many multitudes about him, all with accusing fingers and loud cries. And Peter had awakened.

There was no light on in his room, and, under ordinary circumstances, he could have seen the starlit world. But the outer windows of the little apartment were solid with black rain. Boom of thunder! Another! Another still!

"In the grave," thought Peter, "one should have, if capable of feeling anything at all, some such sense of loneliness and isolation." He pressed his face deeply and yet more deeply into the shaking pillow, and beheld, down, far down, the white magnificence of a cathedral—a church that should redeem everything, excuse everything, compensate for everything —even his own face and the deeper soul of him to which it was a perfect index.

CHAPTER XVI

Mark Where This Man Goeth and What He Doth

On the morrow the train kept rushing eastward, eastward. By night they had sighted the mountains, and, when morning had again come, they were slipping beneath North River and into New York.

In the course of the next two days, Peter bought bales and bales and still more bales. Strange and curious things had been put into these bales.

Then—shipping of self and bales to Southampton. Train to London. A few hurried consultations, certain definite arrangements. Steamer to Oporto with two strong men who had had experience in the land whitherto he was journeying.

Then a Portuguese steamer bound for the west coast of Africa. It was commanded by a captain who looked like a gorilla, and was crowded with people from every portion of the globe.

Twice or thrice in the course of the long, wearisome voyage, Peter held religious services for the English-speaking portion of these people.

Half way down the Saharan coast, Peter's two men deserted him. He did not argue, seeing that they very much wished to go. Later, the ship touched at a little port almost in the shadow of the Cameroon mountains. The secret now came out. A trader who was on the ship and who had been shorthanded had bribed these men to leave Peter and enter his own service.

The trader himself was first to go from the ship, which he did in a fine little electric launch. Ashore, he disappeared among huts, but, soon returning to the ship, commanded a large boat to be let down to the water. This was promptly filled with heavy casks. "Ho!" laughed the gorilla. "All ye that thirst, drink of the water of life!"

The men who had deserted Peter were down in the boat arranging the casks, but their leader was still on the deck of the ship, shouting down orders to them.

Peter, strangely enough, went up to the big fellow, challenged him, and threshed him soundly.

The men in the boat climbed up to assist their leader, and Peter threshed them too. The captain stood by, laughing.

Down they all went, then, all three, the trader and the two deserters, into the boat, cursing but disabled, and the boat set off on its fine missionary enterprise.

The ship, too, got into motion again.

Southward.

Southward, always southward.

One day said the captain to Samuels, "Just a day or two, Mr. Preacher, and you'll see Comafra."

Peter gazed and beheld, as he thought, a friendly coast. This idea he uttered. But the captain: "Clouds."

Late that afternoon the clouds assumed a still more friendly and welcome shape. A long, purple, irregular range of them rose up from the horizon in the far southeast—dropped down out of sight again.

In the morning a real shore seemed somewhat nearer. Black, jet-black rocks appeared that shone like jewels, crude, semi-precious jewels. These went by, and a low, flat coast slid into view.

Now it seemed to Peter Samuels as if there had come to him of a sudden a sacred cry, a call from the infinite. And ever the coast seemed waiting, waiting. After all these Christian centuries, waiting still. "Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands!" In vain? In vain?

The captain came up, grinning as usual. "That's Comafra." Then he sneered: "If you get off at the port of Murumba, Mr. Preacher, they'll use your hide for spirit drums."

"They haven't made spirit drums of Bishop McDonald's hide, and he's been long living alone, the only white person in Murumba."

"Think I'll take you on a little farther, just the same. Then you can't get hurt."

Peter understood. Another missionary in Comafra might prove dangerous to the European agents of hell. He would not argue further. In silence he presented a letter from the vessel's owners in New York.

The captain read, quit sneering, ordered Peter's effects on deck, and moved crestfallen away.

Next day, in the middle of the afternoon, the ship slowed down and then stopped. "There, Mr. Preacher: there's Comafra."

Peter looked over the water of a little bay, and beheld Murumba. In the foreground was a bright

and rather large wharf built of new, unpainted boards; in the background a great soft purple wall of jungle. Between these two conspicuous objects were numerous small, round huts resembling skulls. Off at one side was a large, somewhat oblong building, and behind that, another. In and out among the little skulls of houses writhed black masses, apparently of human beings. Sometimes arms flew up, and the masses writhed more. Peter had always thought of Africa as a great, sleepy continent, which, lying in a somniferous sun, slept on and on, and knew not of its sleeping. But here was a scene of intense, even hadean, activity.

"Go!" said the sullen captain, and Peter went down into the launch. Therein already a black to engineer and guide it to Murumba. As the boat began to throb, the sun poured down an intolerable glare and a pitiless heat which made the coast of Africa seem like a swaying mirage. Came soon from shore a muffled, multitudinous cry, or, rather, a low hum of inarticulate protest—something between the protracted groaning of an earthquake and the long, despairful howls of perishing beasts. A sudden swelling of the hum into a terrible roar! Oddly human it became then (if still inarticulate) a blood-curdling, hair-raising shriek, a throaty rebellion against infinite sorrows, as well as physical pain, wild, unavailing protest against the endless cruelty of one's fellow men—the composite voice, so to speak, of all helpless Africa.

CHAPTER XVII

When God Died in a Woman's Soul

Peter had not been long gone from Starlight when Burley "joined church." The Samuels church it was that he joined, and if the simple truth be told (though Burley did not himself fully realize the fact) it was Peter's sermon on the glorious Fourth that had resulted in his conviction and conversion. There is a way about good sermons that often passeth understanding. They imperceptibly penetrate into the deeper places of the mind, they seep in, they capture the imagination, the heart—at length the citadel, the very spirit. William had for long, long years attended the Samuels church, side by side with good, dutiful Elizabeth, so the transition from non-membership to membership was easy. "At last the church shall have its dues," he said. And, having joined, he gave to the church of his substance very liberally.

Burley had, in truth, been converted. He had first of all seen the blackness of his own sins. He had felt, too, the infinite grace of Jesus, whereby, spite of his much misdoing, his soul might be redeemed. He had even cried a little when he had got back home from the meeting after he had given his name in. Elizabeth had dutifully kissed him, and done some sobbing herself. She always believed that her husband's conversion was owing to the new min-

ister—a tall, lean, sallow-faced young man who had preached a series of sermons on "the mathematics of salvation." "William was always great for figurin'," she said to Patricia, "and that, I expect, is the way the young man got him. It was the mathematics." The preacher's name was Mattison, but Elizabeth, one day, when "in company," chanced to call him "Mr. Mathematics," and, for a very long time, the name was semi-secretly but persistently applied to the young preacher in and about various church circles of Starlight.

Patricia had been at Elizabeth's house when Elizabeth had told her that Burley had decided to give himself to God that night. "He's been a mighty long time getting round to his duty," said Elizabeth, "but Bill can't fly to God or to anything else the way some folks can. He can only creep up on hands and knees."

"We must all go to God on our knees," answered Patricia, with a tiny, church-like sigh, as if she herself had known what it was to take that humble attitude in the presence of the Creator—as well as of her husband. "To God we must all stoop. It is inevitable: we must stoop."

She had come to Elizabeth in a deep spiritual distress of her own, but, after talking for a few moments with her about Mr. Burley, she had gone back home uncounselled, unrelieved. Who indeed should relieve her? Not, surely, the sallow-faced young man with his sermons on algebra and conic sections. Or

should he? Where was Peter now? She had not heard from him for more than two weeks.

At first she had thought that her trouble was all a morbid outgrowth from worry about Peter. And, no doubt, in the beginning, her difficulty may have been due to that cause. But, as time went by, she perceived with greater and greater distinctness that she was not actually fearing for Peter. Trust Peter to come back. Why, who could prevail against Peter? Not fever or wildest beasts or still savager men. Yet she grew more and more distressed continually.

She had never quite accepted Christ. Of that she became at length very sure. She had never realized the fact, though, until now. And this was the thing that was troubling her. Before she had met Peter she had been a churchwoman, and she had really believed that she believed. But, with Peter's advent into her life, she had seen her old religion as a colorless and almost worthless thing. Religion was something different from all that, the true religion of Peter. She could but see the Lord, even as she saw most other things, through the eyes of Peter. Now that Peter was gone—substantial blindness.

She bought many books on religion, and read them thoroughly. Then she cast them away. She turned to the Bible again, read that. Somehow, it was all as nothing, even the Bible. She must see the greatest truth with Peter's eyes, or it looked small, even passed completely out of sight. She never had fully realized how dependent she was on Peter—depen-

dent in everything, excepting of course finance. As to that department of her spiritual activities, she would brook no assistance. She never had had any, even from Peter. She never would have. No stooping, Madam Self, to that.

That same night she went to hear the Reverend Mathematics and his Q. E. D.'s in the Peter Samuels church. The lean young gentleman, that night, for some strange reason, departed from his algebraic and trigonometric salvation-series, and delivered instead a eulogy on capital. By way of conclusion, he denied the divinity of Jesus, the supreme authority of the Scriptures, and, in a word, declared that man must work out his own spiritual salvation by means of his intellect. All the better classes, he declared, had accepted this principle now.

It was an unfortunate occurrence for Patricia, the hearing of this sermon. In the black night of her soul, she had seen, hitherto, a distant light—faint, faint, but continually shining. That light was the simple thought that, somehow, her minister would, eventually, give her help. And now her minister had extinguished even that, the last, tiniest spark.

So deep was her depression that, in the weary time near dawn, when souls are generally at their strongest, she contemplated, there in her soft, white bed, a terrible suicide. "Peter! My husband!" she cried till the walls of her room rang and rang again. "Why are you not beside me? Peter, my God!"

She arose and read till the servants stirred. Then she telephoned for Straight, who promptly came.

Patricia would have deceived him gladly, even in the condition she was in. But the doctor saw some terrible situation in her face, understood her (as he thought), sent for an entertaining nurse, and made Patricia return to bed. Then he wrote Peter a brief note, which, however, never reached him. Mails in Comafra are notoriously bad.

Burley, meanwhile, sold his controlling interest in Church Rock to no less active a person than Grindon Grounch. His idea of building a church had proved a very temporary one. In fact he had nearly forgotten all about it. Then, too, Burley could not be content to stand further as a rival in the matter of Church Rock to the man whose preaching he had always so greatly admired and now so sorely missed. Yet neither could he quite bring himself to turn his Church Rock interest to Peter. It would have seemed like giving in to the enemy.

But Burley was not wholly a bad lot. So, after a time, he deeply repented that he had turned his Church Rock shares to Peter's greatest foe. He went to Grounch again and again, offering to buy back the stock. Even at a very great premium, he offered to buy it back. But Grounch was obdurate. Nothing that Burley could say or do would move him in the least. "Transgressors must pay," Grounch would grind out over and over.

"What you mean, 'transgressors'?"

Grindon would not tell him. They must pay, these transgressors. That was an end of the matter.

Then, one day, a strange thing happened. A little, insignificant looking old maid died, and Burley was very happy. He was not exactly happy because the woman had passed from life, but, seeing that she had had to pass, he was glad enough that matters had been left by her in the shape in which they stood.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Bishop That Looked Like Christ

It took Peter some time to get his effects ashore—all those bundles of velvet, beads, chewing gum, tobacco, and whatsoever tickles the restless eyes and palates of frivolous folk not only in Starlight but also in Comafra. At last the launch was empty, and, the blackamoor still running and guiding it, on its way back to the ship.

And Peter, on the bright wharf, stood up among his bales and looked about. The cry of all Africa had passed. The black masses had vanished. There was only one human being in his view. That one was moving toward him.

A tall, very slender young white man, it was that came. He had a close-cropped beard, and heavenly blue eyes full of pleading love blended with infinite sadness. Peter's first thought was that here was a much discouraged Christ—a Christ, as one might say, in Hades, endeavoring to rescue souls that did not wish to be rescued, souls which, spite of infinite love and mercy laid before them, preferred to be damned.

Never before, he thought, had he seen a face or figure that so took hold upon the heart of him, Peter Samuels.

He was just about to say, "Bishop McDonald, well loved hero of all Comafra, I am only Peter Samuels

from the United States." But the bishop was beforehand with him.

The bishop had already in fact reached the end of the wharf, and had stopped and shaded his eyes with a thin, tremulous right hand. Now he cried shrilly and with strange exultation: "Peter Samuels! At last! Thank God! I received all your remittances and have kept both the letters and your portrait. Thank God for *them,* now—for *you.*"

But Peter going slowly up to him, took his hands with bowed head, and murmured: "Do not mistake the purpose of my visit, Bishop. I am come on a disagreeable, an immediately commercial, enterprise. No bad one, either, for it is remotely religious. Has such and such a man [describing him] been here? Is he here still?"

The bishop: "Not here, but gone lately. In six weeks he is sure to be back. There was with him another of such and such an appearance."

Peter: "Nothing for it but to wait, then."

"Abide with me," sighed the bishop kindly. "I shall be happier if you make it six years, truly, or sixty—could you live that long in Comafra."

But Peter rejected the invitation for the longer times, saying: "I have much business in Starlight, must soon return."

"Our Father's business?"

Peter hesitated. Slowly: "Our Father's business.—But the crowds and the wailings—the tumult which I heard as I came toward the shore?"

"A caravan of slaves," replied the bishop. "Gone now. Driven through the village like cattle, they are on their way to a larger place south. There a great ship awaits them. It will take them over to islands in the west—to labor, to sorrow, to die."

"But I thought such things had been banished by law."

"Here, as in Starlight, laws are often broken." He suddenly stopped stock still, listening.

A far cry, thin, multitudinous, dying finally again to silence.

The bishop stood as he was for a long time. Thought Peter, "This African bishop of a Christ looks more discouraged even than I had thought."

They went into the village, and the bishop there gave a long, low, nasal cry. Then, one by one, with many a scared look round, and quick scamperings back and slow comings forth again, the inhabitants of the village at length emerged from the jungle, its various holes and hiding places, and once more entered their skull-like homes.

Said Peter, "Let us pray." He prayed.

Then the bishop: "You speak Comafran, Mr. Samuels?"

Peter: "In a way."

The bishop called out all the people, and they came and stood in a little shady place, and Peter, in their own simple tongue of about six hundred vocables, preached the sweet comfortings of Christ. Many wept. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and

are heavy laden," cried Peter. And behold! the entire congregation arose as one man, and went and knelt round Peter. Now all were weeping.

"And I, O Peter Samuels," cried the bishop, "have not been able to do this."

Peter kissed all the poor, simple black foreheads. Then he sang. And his rich voice came back out of many places in the jungle, as if a whole choir of ecstatic angels had rejoiced therein at the help which had come to Comafra.

Not merely the poor blacks wept then. The bishop wept also.

Peter was always like that—able, somehow, to get at people's hearts. It might have been the touch of southern blood in him.

That night and all the nights while he awaited the return of his man, Peter slept in the bishop's house. And the bishop seemed now not so much like a discouraged Christ. More like Christ, and not so much discouraged.

And Peter strove, each day that he waited, to learn more fully the Comafran language. This not only from the bishop but from all the people round about him. And he strove also to learn the people's ways and beliefs, that he might the better understand the hearts and the souls of black folk.

One day, of a little girl, he asked: "Whom dost thou worship?"

"My father."

"Where is your father?"

She pointed to the ground. "He still lives—in a

village a long way down in the soil and rocks. There he has many cattle, blue with red spots and white."

"To whom dost thou pray?"

She opened her eyes wide. "My father." Then she laughed. "Also to the father of our chief. I had forgotten that. And sometimes my father comes up from the earth and gets into me. Then he tells me what to say, what to do. He told me where to find berries once, and I found them. If I did not remember him and sometimes sacrifice to him, he would have to eat grasshoppers, and, in time, would die of cold high up on the mountains."

"He is not, then, dead already?"

She laughed again. "Of course he is dead. But, if any dead person be not sacrificed to, he can die again. And that is a death more terrible. I think you are ignorant." She gave a great shout of savage laughter, and suddenly ran screaming away.

Presently Peter saw her little naked body slipping round the trunk of a palm tree. He remained quiet, and, in good time, she shyly returned.

She held in her hand an alligator tooth. "It is yours," she whispered. But, just at the moment, glancing round, she made a wild outcry, threw the tooth away and ran, while Peter, by some strange instinct, ran also. And he, looking back, beheld, depending from a limb precisely above the place whereon he had been standing, a lazily moving, putty-colored double coil—a veritable gray garland of death.

The serpent dropped into the grass and slid away,

while the child, from a distance, screamed: "My father! It is my father. He would not have me give you presents."

Now Peter did not try to reason with this child. But he went to the mission-house, and, taking a pan of fresh milk (of which he had heard that all serpents are fond) he went and set it by the edge of the tall grass, and, standing at a little way off, began to whistle in a low tone. Sure enough, in a very few moments, here came Mr. Putty-color, and lapped up the milk. After which he slid softly away again. Then Peter went to the child, and talked to her.

And he preached often to the people, after the day's work in jungle or field had been accomplished, and with much success, for he was learning all their ways, and he was, too, a preacher by his very nature and blood.

Came one day a trading caravan (not a slave affair) out of the jungle with ivory and rubber. The bishop talked with the Portuguese trader-in-chief, and came and said to Peter: "Your man will not be here for six weeks longer."

"Nothing for it but to wait, then," said Peter again.

And when the caravan had passed to the southward, there to go upon a ship with its many wares, then Peter and the bishop went walking, for the bishop wished to say things to Peter.

They passed up the shore, then round a corner of the vast jungle, and so to a plain where many

fields were, with people working in them. And so on.

They had just reached the border of another great jungle, with a single path which led to its inky depths. Peter would then have taken the path, but the Bishop laid upon him a thin, transparent hand.

"Therein death." So said the bishop. "The chief of all this district has there his family cemetery. In the center is a clearing where they leave the dead. But to enter so much as the thicket itself means for the transgressor burning alive. Moreover the place is filled with beasts and serpents, for no one ever hunts in that solitary wilderness at any time at all."

Even as the two watched the impenetrable and danger-filled thicket, some leviathan of the jungle coughed therein and coughed again. Something rustled in the dry leaves at Peter's feet and slipt into the royal cemetery.

A horror seized upon him, almost a prophetic vision of disastrous things to happen to him, even Peter Samuels, in some such place as this.

"Let us go away from here," he said, in a creepy voice.

Now, on the morrow, came certain natives from the interior. And this time the word was, "He will not return at all."

"Not in six months or a year?"

"Not, as I have said, at any time whatever. He and the man that is with him are on their way to Northeast Africa, bound thence for Egypt. For he,

the man you seek, has done some terrible crime in the interior, and, even as he came into this land (for so I have heard that he came) looking for his safety, so he is now going hence on the same errand."

Peter therefore said to the bishop, "The caravan —get it ready—the little caravan of which we have spoken. So much time has been lost!"

The bishop got together for him all at once a caravan of twenty men—the promptest and the hardiest and the boldest (so said the bishop) in all the village.

CHAPTER XIX

Two Ways For God's One Man. Which?

They took them, all these twenty men, lanterns and utensils and tinned foods. Of spears and bows and arrows, too, there was a plentiful store. And some bore guns and cartridges, for such things Peter had concealed in the bales he had brought from America. He had also sticks of dynamite and other forceful arguments. All these things in addition to the bright calicoes, the smooth velvets, the kaleidoscopes, the beads, jumping jacks, and so forth.

Now, in Comafra the word for "traveling" is "boring," because, in that country, to travel is really to bore, so to say, right through the thick mass of jungle. There are no roads whatever. Others who have bored before you in the tall grass have made a twisting tunnel, winding in winding out, winding around and all about, and you, too, bore through this tunnel, separate its sere and yellow sides once again, push on through its dimness or its darkness, its ever-surprising tortuosities, its lurking, slipping dangers, like a blind man, feeling and fearing, fearing and feeling once again.

Peter had already said "good-bye" to the entire village, and had moved with his men and supplies to the jungle's mouth, two big straight guides in front of him. Suddenly Peter turned, moved by

one of those sudden impulses which, with him, were instinctive. The picture which he saw he would never forget. There, in the distance, lay the wide, blue, enameled sea. When should he behold that wondrous sight again? There was the long, shipless dock too, the hundred skull-like houses—to which, already, he had become strangely attached. About the lonely mission house and the minister's little home stood a group of weeping negroes trying a little to sing some song he had taught them. In their midst, the slender, sickly bishop, his tremulous and transparent hands upraised towards the sky. How much he still looked like a discouraged Jesus!

Peter turned again and said—

"Bore."

They started boring.

They had not gone in the grass more than a mile before the leader of the spearmen stopped the train, and, turning to Peter, explained: "You have many valuable things which we all want. Give us them now and live to return to the village, or else die and so let us have them anyway."

Peter spoke with the man, and the caravan passed on—the man who had demanded tribute, the most willing of any.

They came, in late hours, to a cleared space, where, in years now gone, numerous caravans had bivouacked. Here they ate and Peter sang. And when he had finished singing, they all lay silent for a very long time.

The glorious gold and crimson banners of the departing day were broadly flung out. Next, withdrawn. The twilight followed closely. Then stars—stars! And still the men spoke not, nor moved.

Of a sudden, a thin, far cry; very, very far indeed. But Peter understood. The voice of all Africa once more. Nearer, still nearer it came. O cry of a continent in great misery! Peter put his fingers in his unchristian ears.

Soon, from a tunnel in the eastern grass, emerged, first of all, caravan guides. Then soldiers. Then the *olombongo* (moving money), in other words slaves. Strong men here with desperation in their eyes, women with children in arms or yet unborn. Little folks, too, running along: some who had no hands, waving their arm-stumps in fearful expostulation and adding their childish tones to the cry of all Africa. Such flesh could do no work, it was true. Yet, to the southward, it could make good eating.

Into the south grass headed the caravan—first the guides, then the warriors, then the "moving money." Last of all, the whippers, with hippopotamus whips. These whipped and whipped again.

In the morning, the leader of Peter's caravan said: "We should gladly hear more about love."

So Peter spoke further as he had spoken in the first place, when insurrection had threatened him. And all the men wept. And they came and kissed his two hands—these simple loving children of the

African forest. He prayed for them then, and they wept more.

And they all continued on their journey, which was soon through a forest.

But when they had come to the borders of the forest, and where a wide plain again was, then they met slave caravans and trade caravans and caravans of soldiers. At length the traveling caravan of a great chief.

And now Peter's treacherous guide, forgetting the good impulses which Peter had aroused in him, would work him woe again—forsooth sell him to the great chief as a slave.

With many oaths and curses he declared that Peter was in debt to him and could not pay. Hence, sale for debt.

But Peter took the man and bound him and sold him in the stead of himself—"swapped" him, rather, for another guide, who was to be indeed the slave of him, Peter.

And Peter's caravan went on.

But behold, they met, at the ford of a stream, yet another chief, with hostile soldiers. And this chief demanded, not tribute merely, but all that Peter had, yea his very person also.

Then Peter to his men: "Will ye sell me, O brethren?"

But they, "Speak unto these people with your silver tongue. Then shall we need no fighting."

Peter would have spoken, but the enemy would not hear. Instead, they attacked. And his men

cried, "Shall we let Ochindele (the big devil) be killed? Nay, not so." They fought manfully.

But the enemy were many indeed and the fight was very long. Back, back Peter's men were driven. Back and back farther still. And now a dozen terrible warriors were all threatening Peter at once with hatchets and great spears. One gigantic fellow thrust at Peter's throat and would surely have transfixed him, but Peter's new guide, with quick step, leaped in front of Ochindele and himself received the deep wound.

Peter's men, at this bold example, rallied and became themselves the attackers. But when they were shouting songs of victory, the guide lay with his head in Peter's lap.

Said he, fainting, yet pointing into the west: "I am told that your people will some day bring us help from that direction—great help and much tenderness and love."

"They will bring them," said Peter.

"It seems not possible. From that direction—from the west—from *Mbonshi*—from Dead Man's Land! It seems not possible."

"From Dead Man's Land we will surely some day bring you help and love and life everlasting."

"Then life is to come to us out of the redness, out of Dead Man's Land! It seems not possible. Yet you have said this thing to us, Ochindele. I believe."

So he died.

And Peter buried him, and chose yet another guide, and went on.

On and on, deeper and yet more deep. Boring, boring. Death and Peter Samuels lay down together, together uprose, marched together on. Yet was Peter not abandoned of God, and he perished not.

Out of the tall grass and into a bare plain again. Another bivouac. In the morning, again on. More grass-days of it. Vast barrens again, then again more grass. Then forests and small mountains. More grass.

Snakes, leopards, lions. Occasionally a strong man lost—lost physically of course. We are not talking much about souls here. On again and on. O fearful pinpoint of volition from the red, dead land of the West, boring into deeper and deeper peril. After all, for what?

His supply of canned meats at length gave out. There were no wild fruits now, not at this season of the year. He ate therefore monkeys and dogs and boa-constrictors. Toads and crickets were veritable delicacies, flavored by the sour smell of near-by unwashed negro. Why should a bit of volition, forcing a way into deepest dangers, haggle about diet, when diet of some sort it must indubitably have, if the ends of commerce are to be attained?

So Ochindele (Big Devil) and his olangama (carriers) went on.

On and on, deeper and deeper into the heat and the glare, the "aroma Africanum," the supersti-

tion, the ignorance, the cannibalism, the "red sunsets" (multitudinous human sacrifices celebrated whenever chieftains die) secret rites unmentionable —on and on into the very soul and black heart of blackest things. Restless America boring like a volition-worm into the vitals of Comafra after some merely commercial object! Peter was not, truly, so very bad as men go in Africa. At all events he took not with him rum or syphilis, as many a white man who had gone that way before him had actually done.

Now and then Peter came across the clue of the man he so ardently sought. Lost it. Got it once more. Lost it again. Always went on. Now he was very hot on the trail, in more senses than one. The man, as he learned, was just three days ahead of him, encamped. Yet, when Peter arrived at the scene where the man was supposed to be, the quarry had strangely vanished. Not a trace or any clue at all left after him.

Except, one day, the guide brought back a bit of paper which he had found pinned to the bole of a palm. It read, "Me you will never find—Monty Muggins."

Peter kept grimly on, went perhaps a little faster than before.

Came rains, several unexpected and torrential rains. Progress impeded. Progress, later, impossible. Peter laughed and waited with grim good humor. Told stories, listened to stories innumerable. Cemented tighter and stronger all the strong

friendships he had been making each day, each hour, with his little band of men. There was no saying just how soon some great strain might be cast upon those friendships.

The rains over, on and on.

Often he was held up by petty local chiefs for tribute. Once, when his stock of beads and trinkets was getting low, Peter refused to make payment. He knew his band was superior to the soldiers of the chief. And when the war drums sounded and shrill cries blended with their beating, there emerged from a near-by forest a very much greater chief than this who opposed him, with hundreds and hundreds more of hardy spearmen. Then Peter, advancing: "This scoundrel of a little chief here, this vassal of yours, would have had for himself the tribute which I have brought for you alone." He gave to the great one a single kaleidoscope, extolling its wonderful virtues so, so expounding its marvelous power of forecasting the future and of communicating with the dead, that, shortly, the chief, in exchange, presented him with a long tusk of ivory worth far more than Peter's total equipment.

Hereafter, no more showers of tribute for anybody. Only a miraculous kaleidoscope and a yet more miraculous lecture therewith. Some folks say we should work not talk. But here—let all be invested to the greatest advantage. The talk did the work.

Off again for deeper boring.

On a far distant day in the past, when America itself was still a ravening wilderness, there had come from out the English people certain men and women that were superrestless, filled with volition and sheer mad, raging enterprise. These had settled (at least in a manner of speaking) in America. Likewise, out of the Irish people had come others of a superrestless character. These also had settled in America. And out of the Scotch people also, and out of the French people, and out of the German people, and out of all the Scandinavian peoples, and even the calm, placid Dutch people, had come many others that were superrestless and overfilled with mad volition. And they had all settled in America. It seemed indeed as if, in the wilds of the North American continent, some great angel of irresistible destiny had suddenly arisen, and, with undisobeyable accents, had shouted to all the superrestless spirits of the Nordic peoples: "Hither! Come hither, O ye of mighty enterprise. Here, at length, is your home."

And hither they had all come, to wild America.

And here they had begotten sons and daughters.

And they and the daughters and the sons had fought with savages and with fearful beasts and with terrible diseases. And they had conquered the vast wilderness, and had made them homes in the places where the wilderness had been.

But still the spirit of restlessness held sway over them, for it was in the blood.

And other generations were begotten and passed away. And yet others also. And yet others again.

And still the spirit of restlessness held sway over them, for it was in the blood.

And they had but little of the kind of imagination that produces great pictures, great poems, great speeches and cathedrals. That was not in the blood.

There came, then, out of southern Europe and into America, many that had imagination. And they and the sons and daughters that had come out of them, commingled with the daughters and the sons of them that had come over in the days when only wholly restless people came.

And the children that were born of these later unions were quicker and stronger by far in sympathy, in imagination, in insight, in vividness, and, most of all, in sheer, irresistible eloquence. And they had not lost the restlessness of the old stock either, the enterprise, the unconquerable volition. Nor had they lost the love of God which had come over with the earlier folk. They had increased it, rather.

One of these later products was Peter Samuels, now in the vast continent of beast-filled Africa, a bit of volition, a pinpoint, an atom. Not dynamite, but dust, was passing through Africa, yet with a terrible energy—and, withal, with a certain (not too much) love of God and of justice within it.

So—on.

One day Peter's guides had been out reconnoitering. They reported that the quarry had gone to Obomey, "the city of skulls."

"You ask what kind of place Obomey is," quoth they. "Ha, ha! It is the heart of Comafra. It is like its name, a city all skulls. There is one skull on the peak of every house-top. One skull is over every doorway. One skull at the top of hundreds and hundreds of poles set all about the streets of the city. The women make them girdles of babies' skulls, and the men handles for their walking-sticks. Ha, ha! You quail, Ochindele. But the man you hunt has gone to Obomey for a three months' stay."

Up and on, then, boring a quick way to Obomey.

Now into a tiny village again, a "wiped-out" village. As many poles, so many heads. Each head either glaring, or solemnly dreaming, or laughing oddly at its own ridiculous plight—loftily exalted but helpless nevertheless.

At the next village the "wipers out" were found, and Peter, for an hour, preached unto them. He had promised the Christ-like Bishop that he would, from time to time, wherever occasion specially implored him, preach to these helpless folk. There was fervor in his eye now, a strange light and a glistening. He preached. And they all wept and came up round about him. Would he not stay and preach more? It was impossible, he curiously thought. So he went on.

One day the chief guide became lost, for the country in which they travelled was a great solitude. Miles and miles, and not so much as a trading caravan or a sign of "moving money" or even an individual hunter. "Just last year," explained the guide, "last year at this very season, when, as now, the grass of all this country was very yellow and dry, a chief who could not conquer the land with sword, set it afire, and burned up all the beasts and all the people. So there is none now of whom I can ask a question, and I know not the way."

So they wandered round and round. Again and again the leader believed they had discovered the path to Obomey. "Obomey is still a long way off, Ochindele. But this we know to be the proper 'boring.'" So they bored again, and yet came back to the spot wherefrom they had started.

One day they reached a great desert. Obomey must be the other side of that. Days and days of heat and walking. Vultures followed. Not altogether in vain.

But still the unwearying pinpoint from America continued. There seemed to be no possible hindrances to a pinpoint of volition, even in immeasurable Africa—at least when it pointed straight to business ends.

One day, while boring, they came at right angles upon a much broader trail. Said one of the guides, "We have a saying in Comafra, Ochindele, that a well-worn path must lead to a big chief. Shall we

not then take this path? I know not whether it will lead us to Obomey, but it is a big path."

Said Peter, "Take it."

So they took the path, and it was very much easier boring. After many days they came out into a plain again. The guide, pointing, shouted: "Smoke!"

There was, in the distance, smoke. So they plodded smokeward.

But it was only a tiny village after all which they found, like hundreds and hundreds of other villages through which they had passed before they had entered the wide solitude. Two dozen skull-like houses —mere pig-styes, full of stench and superstition and cruelty. Poor old pig-sty of an unchanging Comafra. Stench and superstition and cruelty, and—worst of all—the white man's syphilis and the white man's rum.

Peter inquired the way to Obomey, preached to the villagers for an hour, and left them weeping.

More villages again. And again more villages. At length they glimpsed yet another *ombala,* or chief's town.

"Obomey!" cried Peter.

"No, Ochindele," said the guide. "It is not Obomey, but it is a great town nevertheless. Its name is Obombey (Starlight) and its king is Slabub. Next to the king of Obomey, he is the fiercest in all Africa. See, even now we pass beside the royal cemetery of the place. Not so close, Ochindele, to the margin, but keep nigh unto me."

As he spoke, some leviathan of the jungle coughed therein and coughed again. A little flat-headed serpent rustled through the grass near Peter's feet, and on into the park of death.

Rounding the corner of the cemetery, they came, of a sudden, in full view of the town—Obombey—the African Starlight.

Just at the border thereof, the chief was cutting the throat of a witch, while one of his laughing headsmen had just beheaded a child, because forsooth it had cut the wrong teeth first. So explained the guide to Peter.

CHAPTER XX

God's Man in Deeper Darkness

Peter and his little band awaited in silence the inhumation of them that had just died. For this was a very great chief. His yea was yea forever, and likewise was his nay. Important, then, to get that "yea" in the first instance. So Peter and his people awaited in silence, while the great chief—who, somehow, looked no little like the old corrupt mayor back in the American Starlight, had finished with his heathen ceremonies.

Then Peter went up, and all his men behind him, to the very border of this African Starlight, and there stopped. Peter was holding in an outstretched hand the great blue tube of a kaleidoscope.

Said the King, without ceremony: "Come and be with us for a day. Then I will eat you, Muhemba (Outsider) and give your bones to my women. Come, for return out of here you shall not."

Now Peter, knowing the weakness of the native African for sweet song, went singing toward the chieftain; and his men, who knew the ways of Ochindele and had great confidence in them, followed the man without fear.

Nor did Peter stop moving until he had reached the King's close presence. And the song that he sang, as he walked leisurely along, was: "See! From the red way of the West, out of the country

of the dead, I come unto thee, O King of kings, with a worth-while present. It is the greatest of all gifts that any man could give to any other, for there is in it magic. It comes—from the country of the dead."

He held the kaleidoscope up towards the sky, and peered into the tube. Then, after a time: "I see herein, O King, thine own future. It is very plain to me."

The King rose and came and knelt at Peter's feet. There he gave a shrill cry, "Shall I conquer Obomey?" He clasped his hands tightly together, and tears of impatience started from his distended eyes.

Peter did not too soon answer. First, he turned the instrument round a time or two, then said, like a man who is overcome: "I see a great city, and it is all covered with skulls. There is a skull on the peak of every house, on the king's palace, on each and every pole about the city streets. And the women have girdles made of the skulls of babies, and the men have babies' skulls for the knobs of the sticks they walk with."

"Yes, yes. More. It is Obomey."

"And now an army cometh. By thee it is led, by thee. It rushes upon the city. There is fire in the place now, great smoke also. And now—now. The picture is gone. It is gone for seven more days, O King. The picture has faded from the tube, and, in its place, there is nothing at all but the gems wherewith, each week, some picture of the future is begot-

ten. In seven days more I can read you the rest of the picture, but not now."

"You lie," cried the King, in fierce anger. "The picture is all before you even now. It is only that you may live those seven days more that you say that the picture is gone."

"See then for yourself," said Peter. He presented the eye-piece toward the King.

The King was cautious. But after a little he hazarded one look. Then, "You told me truth. There are only gems, no pictures. I will keep this thing during the whole seven days. If, then, it shows me conquering Obomey, you shall live, Muhemba. But if not, you shall slowly die." He laughed. "And I will eat you with these." He tapped on his great teeth.

And Peter and his men were shown huts to sleep in.

When the evening had come, then Peter (for he could never help his preaching) went out into an open space, which looked across a river to a great stone mountain. And there he preached to all the city, out under the great stars, and sang also. Nor would they let him go until he had both spoken and sung for many hours.

And Peter, going to his hut, thought, as when he had first gone into it: "Before those seven days are up, I shall have converted all this town, and shall then take this fellow of a king and all his warriors with me. And we shall reach Obomey together, and I shall get back the jewels that I seek."

But he awoke in the night all feverish, and with his nerves unstrung. He arose and took quinine, and lay down again. And yet he could not sleep.

In the morning he was very cold and could eat nothing. So the day passed in coldness, and the night began to fall again, and, his fever once more rising, he thought that his guide appeared at the doorway, then entered the hut and compelled him to take nourishment. But of these matters he could never be quite sure, even to the day in which he died. Then again, as it seemed, came the guide and yet not the guide, and pushed his blurred, distorted countenance in at the little hole which was for a door. Something had happened to its lips and nose, and it said foolish things about Christ. Peter, therefore, angered and indignant, cursed it away, and it went. Peter arose, took more quinine, fell again to the floor.

He slept and awoke and heard people in the village. They were softly humming one of the songs which "the man of the West" had sung to them the night before. "Taste the Lord, yes taste Him, and see how sweet He is."

And Peter thought the Lord came into the very hut even as he listened. Being afevered, he spoke first. "Thou hast me," said he, "already, Lord. For I seek to build an edifice unto thee back in Starlight."

"Thou art Peter," said Jesus, "and upon this rock—" so He vanished.

And Slabub came into the door. "O sweet-voiced man," said he, "we would hear again of your Jesus. My people await you."

Peter thought for a time that the King was only a dream, so crept on hands and knees to lay fingers upon it and feel of it. Yes, it was Slabub, the killer of souls and feaster on the flesh of children.

He crept quickly out of the hut. Then willed to arise.

And he arose and went with the King to the same open place as before, there where all the people were gathered together beneath the great African stars. There, too, beyond the horizon, just before him, must lie the Great Bear, watching over the Hemisphere of the North. To the left, Starlight—and Patricia.

The night air, chill and dewy, brought relief to his fevered bones. But mostly the man stood up because he strongly willed that he should do that.

Natives came with gladness, after he had spoken a while and then rested, and hung bright lanterns all about him, that so his features might the more plainly appear to them as they listened to his singing, his preaching, his prayers. Then they went back to merge into the audience, and the night was once more still.

As Peter preached again, he saw the pickaninnies in front, the old gray, wooly heads in the rear; between these, the warriors and the women. He looked out and around to the very margins of the clearing where sentinels were stationed, sentinels with long

spears in their great, strong hands. And each and every sentinel was crying. It seemed not possible, and yet it was true—that life and love were coming to these poor helpless folk out of "the way of the West," out of "Dead Men's Land."

And now, as the crowd itself took greater and greater part in the preaching, the singing and the prayer, Peter began to observe more and more closely (with the eye of a born and also trained observer) the faces that were massed before him. And much surprised he was to notice that many of these faces, in some or another way, very nearly resembled many of those other faces which he had seen back in America. There, for a single instance, was one that suggested old Uncle Henry. If merely the forehead were not quite so flat and low. And there, could it be? Yes, another's countenance was much like that of the man he sought for—that son of the Secretary of State. If only the face were a little fatter, the skin not black. Here was a face like Grounch's. Peter could imagine this man arising, there in the very presence of the King, and saying with outstretched finger (as often Grounch himself had done in that other Starlight): "The transgressor [pause] must pay."

"You no can take sin and live in house with," said Peter. "But love, you can take that. And our enemies, are they not those we have not yet loved hard enough? If we love people enough, they cannot be our enemies. Let us then love the hate out of ourselves first, afterwards out of others."

He proceeded then to tell the story of that one human life which had been most compact of love, that one life which should be an example to all men.

As he reached the Crucifixion scene, he cast his fevered eyes down on the King, who, at his very feet, amid the children, sat as if he were himself a child, drinking with unlimited eagerness the water of the fountain of life. As coarse as clay, shrewd and tricky as an old elephant, he was nevertheless in tears, and his face was filled with the true refinement which only love can give to any human face. At length he cried, "You tear open my breast, Ochindele, you with your story of the Christ. But speak on."

Peter spoke on. He described the Crucifixion with, as it seemed to himself, a simplicity and tenderness such as he had never been able to reach before. "Listen, my people," he cried. "Do you know what it was that crucified our Lord? Ambition, the love of power, the love of wealth." He told about the High Priest, then Judas. "When a man cares more for money than for men, he will do such things. All those people hated Jesus, but behind their hate was ambition, love of money, love of the glorification of self. All those people had a wonderful temple to the Lord. They had built it themselves too. But they had made no temple to Him in their very souls. His entrance into their hearts they had strongly and strangely resisted."

His voice arose, went out over all the people in a great pleading, and died away in the far recesses

of the jungle. Then he sang, thinking of old Uncle Henry: "Taste the Lord! Yes, taste Him, and see how sweet He is." The people arose, and ran and pressed about him on all sides. "More," they cried. "Sing us more. Tell us more." They pressed so close and were then so still, that he could almost hear the beating of their hearts.

"Yes," he cried, "I will tell you more. Listen, for you shall know how greed first conquered love, then how, in turn, it was thereby conquered. For love proves stronger than death, stronger even than greed. Listen. I will tell you." All at once he stopped stone still.

Over amid the farther portion of the town were two large men, seeming white and certainly intoxicated. Peter's bones were strengthening from the quinine now: the ache was nearly out of them. He stood up high and strong. The men were coming straight toward him. Being himself in the clear light, they in the darkness, he could not, for a long time, quite make out their features.

As they approached, however, one said drunkenly to the other: "By God, a missionary!" The other, "Lesh have fun with him."

They came nearer and nearer to the bright light of the lanterns. The first was a raw-boned fellow, whom Peter had seen just once before. The other—Peter gazed with straining eye-balls.

There could be no doubt, he thought, after a time, though the man had much changed. A spineless monster rolling in its own fat, even here in Africa!

Slouching automatically to a post on one side of the congregation, he leaned lazily against it, spat and cried out: "Let her go, Missionary: we'll say the 'amens.'"

Then, all at once, the shifting eyes grew steady, stared with might and main, fairly augered into those of the preacher.

"Peter Samuels, by G—d!"

The negroes, looking first at one then at the other, were unable to comprehend. Said at length the King, "The man is a trader, Ochindele. He has never preached to us at all. Teach him that he too may preach the good words, the words thou has taught us."

Monty gave one swift terrified look more, and, seeing his drunken companion making off toward the wilderness with one of the lanterns, he seized a lantern himself and sped away.

Peter, to the minute of his death, never could altogether lose from his memory the expression of abject fear which he had seen on the young man's countenance. He said to himself, just now, that, judging by Monty's face, Peter Samuels was evidently not Peter Samuels for nothing.

"More!" cried the negroes. "Tell us more. Those men are drunken, and will surely be eaten by the beasts, in case they do not promptly return to us and safety. They will return. Mind them not."

Peter heard the human call about him, and, at the same time, felt a lifting of the spirit such as, in the

railway yards in old Starlight, one night now very long ago, he had resisted to the uttermost.

And he resisted once again.

For there came to him a vision of the old-time Starlight, with all its magnificent streets and edifices, and he beheld once more the cathedral he would surely build there—brighter and better than saved souls, more beautiful than God.

"Yes, my children, I will come again." He was quite sincere. He meant to come back, and very soon.

He seized a lantern, and, going to his hut, picked up rifle and searchlight, and, leaving the lantern, started after the two men. The negroes awaited his return, speechless.

At the outskirts of the village Peter stopped. Yes, there before him went bobbing away the two lights. Far off, the cry of a lone wolf. That was absolutely all—afar, and very much too far to be a portion of the sounds from the royal cemetery nearby.

He drew a pistol, shot into the air to frighten the men still more, and called to them to halt.

But that only increased their speed. Straight down the hillside, drunken and panic stricken they shot like arrows—straight for the royal cemetery. Surely they would not enter there, there in that unspeakable place of concentrated African horrors and almost inevitable death.

In they went, nevertheless.

Peter heard them crashing through the dry grasses for a time, saw, at intervals, the bobbing about of their will-o-the-wispy lanterns, and then—

Calmly put out his own light—as they theirs—and went softly in after them.

Not swiftly or without precaution did Peter Samuels go into the royal cemetery. With short, deliberate steps, rather, and with many a keen pause for listening.

He heard the noises of the men's feet, and kept after them—a little to one side. All the jungle was filled with the pungent smell of cat-like beasts, and the oily odors of venomous serpents. Yet Pete kept steadily on. For, mark you, a man can be intoxicated with ambition, just as certainly, just as persistently, and just as foolishly, as with African whisky.

Straight on into the royal jungle, seeking a number of little stones that would not, altogether, more than fill a lady's little reticule, went high voltage America.

At one of his pauses, he could hear nothing for a very long time. It was no easy task to find men in that labyrinth of rank vegetation, even at midday. He took out, therefore, his searchlight, and holding it to one side of him, pressed the button. Even as he did so, a bullet whined past him, then another, and there was, as he thought, another shot or two that must have gone far wide. His light, of course, he put out, returning the instrument to his pocket.

He stood quite still again for a long time. There was a sound of many beings passing to and fro, he believed, yet no one passed. He was quite sure of that. Yes, quite sure. Then there were more shots. The balls came nowhere near him.

Then a little sound of steady whimpering, or it might have been moaning, some way on ahead. Wind or man or beast? He could not quite be sure, took chances.

So on again. He came, after a long time, to a cleared place, surrounded wholly by jungle wall. This he knew to be the cemetery proper. So he stopped and reconnoitred carefully.

The stars filled all the cleared space with a bright, steady shine. Yet, so many were the natural objects lying round that, for a long time, he did not really see the great, bulky object of his search. At length—a little to the right, there—seated on a log.

Gripping his rifle tighter, he noiselessly advanced, and, a moment later, was standing behind his quarry, saying, in a low, clear voice: "The jewels!"

CHAPTER XXI

The Devil Hath a Missionary Now

Peter Samuels understood very well those things which he had done. He had not harmed Monty in the slightest, neither big fat Monty nor his raw-boned accomplice. Yet he had, very, very clearly, in the eyes of old Slabub, King of Obombey, committed an unpardonable crime. No hope for any more friendship out of old Slabub now. Death, no less, awaited him, Peter Samuels, should he return in the path by which he had come.

He looked about, considering. There sat the fat form of Monty Muggins on a log, straddling it—stone dead and yet upright, just as soldiers in battle often remain (because of the instant cadaveric spasm which gunshot wounds produce) in the very same position as that in which they pass away. There was a foul, sarcastic grin on Monty's countenance, a deep, bloody hole in his breast. A little way from Monty, on the ground, sprawled Monty's bony accomplice, supine, also with a hole in his breast. The two had plainly quarrelled, drunkenly quarrelled as to the proper plans and methods to pursue.

Peter now recalled the strangely agéd look of the elder Muggins, as he had stood in Peter's house, there at Peter's bedside, the third day after the robbery. Poor old elder Muggins! Monty and his accomplice had gone to him, as soon as they had

got the jewels—Monty wishing to exhibit to his father the punishment which he, Monty, had just meted out to the enemy of the family. Why should he not have done so? To that date, there had not been one thing that Monty had ever done which his father had not plainly approved of. Now, however, to Monty's intense astonishment and chagrin, the elder Muggins had flown into a paroxysm of combined rage, fear, and desperation. "What can *you* do with jewels like these?" "Saw 'em up to prevent identification, then sell 'em." "The Pinkertons 'll have you before night." "To hell with the Pinkertons. Peter Samuels 'll never prosecute the son of the Secretary of State." Then Christopher Muggins pronounced upon his son a fearful imprecation, a wish that he had never begotten him. Yes, said much more also. Thereupon off slipped Monty and his pal, and the elder sees his son no more. Down comes Chris to Peter Samuels' residence, but Peter cannot be seen till the third day. Then—what an altered Christopher Muggins! Only a shadow! "Peter, you promised once, if ever—" Peter saw his opportunity. Knowing who the robbers were, he beheld in a flash to what dim corner of the world they would probably go till the storm had blown over. Monty had been very well prepared in former days by Peter himself for a sojourn in Comafra. Well enough. Peter would see that the jewels were recovered without exposure of Monty or any blot or stain upon the Muggins name. He had already sent the Pinkerton men away unsatisfied.

So-o-o—Chris would be his for life. He did not yet know exactly what he would ever use Chris for; but, some day, he would use him. At all events, he had sent old Chris away relieved. Just a little later, after Chris had gone, he had seen that he must follow Monty himself. For this necessity there had been two excellent reasons. First, in no other way could the Muggins name be protected with absolute certainty: a Pinkerton man might tell, or himself be detected. Second, Peter could easily combine with his trip to Africa a trip to London. Moreover, in this very way, he could avoid all publicity in Starlight about his own trusteeship over the jewels. The slightest newspaper noise about that would mean the utter impossibility of his borrowing on the jewels in any center of the world. It was then he had called in Pat—called her from the kitchen. Ah Pat, Pat, and dear old Starlight! And he, Peter, the bright particular star— But, if he wished to see Starlight again, again hear the grinding of its crowded streets, he must even now—

Cautiously, cautiously, rifle still in hand, he crept into the wall that stood opposite to that whereby he had entered.

Safely on through.

A feeling of exultation came over him. He stopped and looked back at the thick jungle into and out of which he had just passed. Not an inevitably fatal place, after all! Dangers? He had at least come past them, not a hair hurt.

Placing his right hand in pocket, he felt of the

cold, sharp rubies with a sense of triumph such as he had never felt in all his life before. The world, far and near, was very quiet, and he still looked about, there at the side of the thicket beneath the bright, strange constellations. One single brilliant star detached itself silently from the midnight vault, and drifted slowly to earth and its darkness. A sudden little wind sprang up and went whispering mystically away into the blackness of the cemetery. Peter glanced at the dense jungle again before bidding the place good-bye. Too full of supreme danger it was, too attractive by far to the pioneer blood in him, that he should rush incontinently off. *Well indeed!* Two glaring spots of greenish-yellow flame! Peter placidly raised his rifle. Yet, after all, he dared not shoot. Too close he was, even here on the distant side of the cemetery, to old Cannibal Slabub and his outraged men. Back there in implacable Obombey—

By a sudden impulse, he pressed his searchlight on, rushed toward the thicket, giving bright glare for bright glare. A guttural *gr-u-umph,* a disappearance of bright eyes, a heavy pounding backward into the cemetery darkness! Peter too went off—in his own direction.

From time to time the man looked back, not from any fear at all or as a matter of simple precaution. Success, thou takest away sense of danger!

As he mounted a rocky ridge, Peter turned and again looked. Even with a strong, boyish longing he gazed lingeringly at the royal burying place, and recalled the vivid dangers through which he had just

passed. He must actually hurry from the presence, while still he could resist it.

Came into his soul a wild phantasmagoric dream—a preposterous plan and project such as never before had entered into even him, compact as he was of bizarre imagination and titanic bravado. To the north and to the east and to the west, all was only stony ridges—a desert—not a blade of grass growing upon it all. Then he himself was surely safe enough. Out of the north, too, a strengthening wind was blowing. Below, as far as eye could reach, a wide wilderness, the whispering sea of dry, beast-filled grass. Beyond that—old Slabub and his cannibal followers.

He went back down, by the way he had just come, stopped at the edge of the cemetery jungle, struck a match, threw it into the sea of sere grass, and ran quickly up the rocky ridge again.

Turning, he saw as it were all Africa in flames. Slabub would not perish—that was certain—he and his people. For there, to the left of Obombey, rose the long, stony mountain which Peter had noticed while preaching. To this refuge whosoever in old Obombey would might easily flee and be safe. Meantime, all the rest of Africa to the south of him was striped and barred with streams and lakes. Here and there, too, desert or mountain. No one to be harmed, then, but the beasts of the jungle, and this, in the end, would be to the saving of much human life. Burn then, Tartarean fire, over sinful Africa.

The fire burned, and the smoke went up from the

whooping jungle, even until it had hidden the Southern Cross.

At last Peter turned away, glutted with the look of flame, took his bearing from the stars, headed west.

At morning he left the ridge and joined a band of "moving money" bound for the Western Sea, though not for Murumba.

Six miles out of Murumba, he left the caravan and "bored" for himself.

Out he came, just where he had entered—six centuries ago, as it now appeared to him. There was the bright enameled sea again, the long, new-boarded wharf also. And there, some hundred yards before him, the tiny village itself—over at one side the same little parsonage and the same little mission house.

He stood for a while, attempting to spy out the "Bishop," the man that so much had looked like Christ. Failing to observe him, Peter went a little farther, was discovered by all the natives and brought by them in triumph to the mission house.

"Ochindele! He has returned! Ochindele, the big devil. He will talk and sing for us again about Christ."

But where was the Bispo (bishop) asked Peter.

"The Bispo?" They repeated the name for a time, as if they never before had heard it. Then, "The Bispo? O yes, the sickly one who loved us so much. He is dead, Ochindele. But now we have another Bispo, a very aged man, also yet another

very white person too, one that sometimes sings to us sweetly, and who is waiting for you, Ochindele, yourself—a woman!"

"A woman!"

"A woman who knows but few of our words. In the mission house she now is working, and—"

Peter was running to the house like a man possessed. A woman came out and stood on the threshold.

"Patricia!"

"Peter! O Peter! I couldn't stand it, Peter, any more, with you off here and in danger. I couldn't stoop to that, you know. I couldn't. O indeed, I couldn't stoop. You were in danger." Woman like, she cried.

CHAPTER XXII

With Hands Outstretched to Ochindele

There came up now, even as Peter and Pat were in the act of greeting each other, a large, fleshy man, with long white hair and beard and a rubicund nose. The natives who, by now, had come up also, began to shout: "The Bispo! The second Bispo! It is he!"

Patricia performed a more civilized introduction of Peter to the bishop, with, as it seemed to her husband, rather a good deal of distaste, not to say disgust.

"I am far from being really a bishop, you know," admitted the man, whose name, it seemed, was Goshen. "Hardly a preacher, in fact. I am simply a locum tenens, sent here by one of the congregations in the South, only because I happen to be versed a little in the Comafran language. I have tried to make Patricia comfortable while she waited for you."

Mrs. Samuels stepped back a foot or two, and began to pat the hair of a little girl—who, thereupon, after a preliminary low humming, began to sing—

"O the Ochindele, the great white man!
He is sure to return to us.
Out of the deeps of the snake-filled jungle,
He is sure to return.
And he will bring again Christ."

As she finished, a deep sweet roar uprose from many throats. Then all began to chant the same song, eyes brightly shining and bodies moving rhythmically—

"O the Ochindele!"

As the last deep words were attained, "And he will bring again Christ," Peter was deeply moved in spite of himself. But the so-called bishop cried, in harshest English: "What do these people know about Jesus? They would rather have a quart of whisky any day. Just try them on whisky."

Then stepped forth a tall, slender young man, who knew merely the one great word of the English language, "Whisky." He had heard the bishop just now use it; so he said, in sweet Comafran: "Yes, give us some whisky."

He was speaking to Peter. Peter shook his head. "I have no whisky."

"Why have you no whisky?"

"Peter," said Pat, "it is time for a sermon."

Peter went to a better place, where palm trees were and plenty of shade. And all the people crowded round him, and he told them first why he had no whisky and why it was better that no whisky should ever be had by anyone.

They listened, not altogether convinced. Then an old white-wooled grandmother spoke straight out in meeting. "What shall we do?" she cried. "I have tasted the white man's whisky, and it is good. You tell us not to drink the whisky, because, in the end, it is bad for us, in spite of the taste and in spite of

the goodness which it seems to give. But what shall we do?"

"Yes," said the oldest of all the men in the congregation. "What shall we do? One white man says, Drink. Another says, Not drink. What is it we shall do?"

Peter was minded to preach to them at once on the evils of strong drink. But when he had considered the people and the nature of their minds, he thought that he perceived a better way to do. He would preach to them, namely, about Christ. And having first filled them full of Jesus' love, he would then, as they wept, go on and tell them of the harms of whisky. Most emphatically of all, he would say that Jesus, who had always loved them so much, had rather they left the whisky alone, because it was full of a spirit that was His one great enemy.

Then he did preach to them of Christ, telling the story, as often he had told it before, in little. And some of the old men wept, and all of the old women. But the younger people, especially the men, remained quiet and cool. Even the older people were not so responsive, quite, as when he had used to speak to them. Then he tried to talk to them all about whisky. Up jumped the younger men, and, with a wild whoop, declared: "You, Ochindele, you are like our former Bispo. You do not like whisky at all. Neither have you whisky to sell. That is why you do not like it any. But the present Bispo, he is the man we love most. We love even better than him his wonderful whisky."

So off they went to the "Bispo." And he gave them bottles of drink in exchange for ivory. But he first made them promise they would go a long way off—there into the North, as far as the woods beyond the further clearings. There they could drink their whisky.

As they went north, Peter and Pat walked south to the wharf.

"When will the next ship come?" asked Peter.

Pat was silent for a long time. At last, as if remembering herself of a sudden and with a great effort, she replied: "In two weeks."

"Stop here, or—"

"It will stop here."

"God! How I hate this country!"

Pat looked back toward the village. Half way between themselves and the town, stood many white-headed people and a few young ones—looking, looking, after Peter and Pat.

"God! How I hate this country! Two whole weeks. God! It might as well be two whole centuries! Anyway— Starlight! Pat, do you remember, do you remember Starlight?"

Pat gave no answer, and Peter went on: "You haven't asked me yet whether I succeeded."

"Succeeded!"

"Yes, succeeded. Haven't forgotten, have you, what I came out here to hell's center for, have you?"

Pat looked once again toward the little silent, unmoving populace—so patiently at gaze, waiting,

waiting. She threw them all a kiss and gently smiled. They burst into joyous laughter, then began humming a little English song, which, in her time of waiting for Peter, Patricia had taught them: "Take me, Jesus, just a little child."

"Did *you* teach them that stuff?"

"Certainly not the Bispo. Not *this* Bispo, at all events."

"Have you learned Comafran?"

"I have wasted no time. I have both learned and taught."

"Here are the jewels. Safe enough to show them, here in Murumba. These damned fools don't know precious stones when they see them."

"Peter, do you know you almost look—you look—"

"How do I look?"

"Just a little bit like Burley."

"Well, Burley will never build the church. *I* will."

Pat was walking away. "Pat! O Pat! Where the devil?"

Pat went on. Peter was puzzled to the heart.

He slipped the jewels into his pocket, felt again to be sure that the pocket was absolutely sound. Then—

"Monty's dead." That would wake her up sure, bring her back suddenly out of curiosity if not from anything else. The announcement certainly did have some effect.

She turned. "Did you kill him?"

"No. He and his accomplice killed each other."

"That's a likely story."

A slap in the face would not have hurt Peter's feelings. He could and would have taken it as play. There was no mistaking Pat's intent, however, when she said to him: "That's a likely story." Whatever he had done or said to other people, he never had lied to Pat. And Pat knew that. She *knew* that. Why, Pat had always been his pal! He had trusted Pat like—like— He felt the hot blood rush to his face. Back into his heart. Then to his face again. Then back to his heart. There, with an effort, he held it tight. O very well. If Pat would not rejoice that he was every inch a true man, that he had come to this veritable Tartarus of a continent, braved its every danger—including the nigger smell—O all right!

He went up past her, and on to the mission house. Having made an ablution, he dressed again, and came on back past Pat. She was talking to all that little group, about America, about Christ.

Peter had his rifle. He went on down the coast. Not hunting, not pouting. He was not the kind of man to pout. Merely this: if one thing didn't interest him, or he it or her, then there were things in the world for him other than she or it. The world was, in fact, full of the most wonderful things.

He went on and on, turned, after a time, and entered a large clearing that ran off eastward. Over at the farther end of the clearing grazed a herd of wild elephants. They were harmless enough. As

he kept on walking toward them, they grew a trifle restless, and, at length, made off with many trumpetings into the forest at the eastern edge of the fields. Peter turned south, and soon was at the southern margin of the clearing. Here he tramped slowly along, filled with numerous gay thoughts. The winds in the leaves spoke to him softly about God, but he did not hear. "List! List!" they said. Yet again, "Stay! Stay!" Still he did not hearken.

As he came back near the coast, he turned once more in the direction of the village, and, rounding a clump of trees, there, in the evening light, beheld the village in a state of vast uproar. Patricia was standing, safe enough it seemed, with a group of women, over at a little distance in the eastern edge of the town, while, around the mission house, a great assemblage of the men was cursing, carousing and even fighting. The whisky had done its work. As Peter went up to the group, he learned yet more. The Bispo, in the middle, lay supine and dying. Stabbed in the breast, he attempted (at first it seemed without avail) to speak to Peter. At length he managed to say, "They got—the rest—of the whisky—away—from me. Drank too much. Unreasonable. Damned beasts." So he died.

Peter got together some of the men who, remembering his advice, had not drunk. These he took to the eastern part of the town, and, setting them up for a guard there around one of the little houses, he and Patricia went into the house and slept. Amid the loud sounds of revelry, the biting of numerous

insects, and even the "aroma Africanum," Peter Samuels slept. He slept all night without a care, without a dream, without so much as the slightest vision of his great white church.

In the morning Peter, awakening, found beside him a little breakfast which Pat had prepared and left there. When he had eaten he joined her. "Six men dead," said she, with a tired smile. "All buried."

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," quoth Peter. "You didn't get to see them?" He began to be horrified.

"See them? What are things like that? I have seen a 'red sunset.' Over yonder. What do other things matter now? I had tried to follow you into the jungle with a little company of scouts. The red sunset—I saw it—I turned back."

When Peter attempted to talk to her further, she would not say a word to him, but went over among the women, and, seating herself, began to help them weave.

Peter called to her, "Gloria! Gloria!" but she paid no attention.

So Peter went on his way, murmuring: "African climate. Beastly! I don't blame her. All right once more she'll be, back in Starlight."

The days dragged wearily by. The ship came a day before its date, but not too soon. A launch came out from the ship, bringing mail for "the bishop." The mail went back, of course, and Patricia and Peter with it. Peter was looking toward the ship,

thinking all of Starlight, nothing of Africa. He heard a little cry and a splash behind him, and looked round.

One old white-wooled negro had broken away from the crowd on shore, and, with hands outstretched, had waded into the sea clear up to his waist, crying: "Na itava! Na itava!" [I believe! I believe!]

Peter made a little low whistle in his throat, then began to sing. He did not really know what song he was singing. He only saw, after a time, while still he sang, that all the inhabitants of the village, both men and women and old and young, had come out into the water just as far as they had dared, silent and with hands outstretched.

And that was the last that ever he saw of these people (who later were sold to slavery and then collectively died) there in the water, as far as they could come toward him, Peter Samuels—silent, and with hands outstretched.

CHAPTER XXIII

Patricia Maneuvers

"Pat," said Peter, when once they had got aboard the ship and into their stateroom. "Did you see?" Patricia did not answer.

That day and the next Pat and Peter travelled through all their waking hours on opposite sides of the ship. Peter, on his part, was not, as yet, greatly astonished by the chasm which he saw yawning so darkly and deeply between them. He knew his wife's sensitive temperament, and believed she had been all unstrung by the African climate. That was the whole story. That was enough, wasn't it? Even he himself had not gone into equatorial Africa and come out unchanged. The Africans themselves were what they were because of their beastly climate. As a man liveth, so is he. And a large part of any man's life is climate. So—let it slide, let it slide. Pat will again be Pat—under northern constellations.

Pat, on her part, was suffering in the deeps of her soul. She had come to Africa to meet her husband, to receive from his presence, perchance even from his words and arguments, the support which she so much needed in the struggle of her spirit. No Peter, no Christ! That summed up Patricia's situation absolutely. Arrived in Murumba, she had proceeded at once to learn the simple language of the place. Then, just because her heart was so hungry, so hungry, she had got her scouts together, and had set

out into the jungle, hunting Peter Samuels—hunting her husband, more than even Christ. She had wanted Peter to talk to her more and more, and yet ever more, about Christ. Peter might keep her from going insane.

When she had only passed a few days' journey into the wilderness, she had come upon a town where the king had just died, had been assassinated. And there her very soul itself, not only her eyes, had witnessed a "red sunset." Then she knew, understood. She had heard people say, back there in Starlight, "Why should we bother other peoples about their religion? One religion is just as good as any other." And now— She knew very well that Christians, at least the kind so-called, had often been terribly bad, even murderers, but always in spite of their religion, running terribly counter to it all. But here—the religion itself was teaching that people should do these things. Was there any difference? She knew: she could answer.

Who, then, could change this Africa? Who? Peter Samuels. No one else had such power to change the human heart: to convince, to convict, to convert, to bring to Jesus. She had seen, too often, in Starlight, the power of this wonderful man. And back in Murumba the people still were singing—

> "O the Ochindele, the great white man!
> He is sure to return to us.
> Out of the deeps of the snake-filled jungle,
> He is sure to return.
> And he will bring again Christ."

The tears had run down her face as she thought of the good that Peter could do in Africa. Why, Africa was Peter Samuels' opportunity. He would get the jewels: there was not any doubt in her mind about that. She was beginning to doubt, however, whether the jewels ought really to be pawned—even for the sake of a stylish and palatial new church building. Then it had come over her very suddenly how terribly wrong it was for Peter to do such a thing. Why no! Of course, he could not do *that!* Wicked beyond measure. How could Peter (such a man as Peter!) ever have thought of pawning jewels not his own, to get the money wherewith to get still more money wherewith to build a stylish church edifice! She would talk to Peter as soon as she saw him again.

Meanwhile—no more red sunsets! These she could never endure. At least she could never endure them unless Peter was by her side. Then —why then! Of course, with Peter— She would be extremely glad— All would be different then.

Meanwhile, suppose she should get lost or killed in this African jungle. What could she do for Africa then? Better, it had seemed to her, to return to Murumba.

She had returned to Murumba, and then, day after day, week after week, had studied the people and also taught them—taught them the world-old story of Jesus. But how new it had still been to all these simple folk! And how gladly they had heard its

every detail. And what a difference it had made in Murumba.

So—hard at work, and not so much distressed in spirit, quite, as when she had come—she had awaited Peter Samuels.

Then, one day, as she had stepped out of the mission-house, she had beheld—there in his jungle uniform, just coming up toward her from the jungle-boring, Peter. At last there was help! Help for Africa! Christianity embodied in human form, Peter Samuels!

But, meeting Peter, she had felt a sickening shock, a strange, a terrifying, reversal of all her former emotion. Why, Peter had somehow been so changed! Was this actually and truly Peter Samuels? Where was the exquisite light which, back in America, had filled his godlike eyes—those eyes which had said to everybody and said truly: "I am your friend"? Nothing but a hard, steely look now, a hard look and a cruel. It had said very plainly, "Get out of my way!" Here was a man that was working for Peter Samuels, not Africa or anybody else. Not even for Patricia was Peter working now. Not to such a man as this—this queer compound of selfishness and push—could she, Patricia Purington, ever apply for spiritual consolation, either for herself or Africa.

When Peter had stepped beneath the palm-tree, and had spoken to the negroes on the evils of intemperance, then Patricia perceived, even as she had not done before, the frightful alteration in her husband's soul. The most of the old-time physical traits

seemed still to be present—the harmonious voice, the exquisite gestures, the beautiful grace of body—these were still there, but the soul of the man was now bad. She saw that plainly. And she also saw that some of the negroes saw it too. Some of these simple children of the jungle have a mystically clear perception of the human heart. Ochindele was Ochindele (Big Devil) indeed!

It is possible that if Patricia had tried to speak to her husband at this conjuncture, she might have changed him back to his former self. At least she might have kept him from committing the crime on which so plainly his heart and soul were still determined. But, to Patricia, the task appeared impossible on account of Peter's changes. Moreover, her pride, her inflexible, never-yielding pride, stood like an iron wall in the way. To put the figure differently: she would not stoop to ask this man to change. A criminal—pah!

One starry night they came together as if by accident in the darkness of the bridge. They stood and talked together for a few minutes, with the black satin of the south Atlantic spreading out ahead and all about the ship, and with the great African stars fairly projecting from the sky—so near, so near. "Like diamonds," quoth Peter. "Like thoughts of God," replied Patricia. "Only there is no God." Peter was not surprised. He was not surprised at anything from Pat in her present mood. Rather, as he got to thinking, he was more and more surprised that Pat had allowed this bit of sentiment

to escape her lips to him, her husband. Not a bad sort was Pat, he reflected, but hardened now by the African climate. Be all right in Starlight, may be all right even tomorrow in the morning.

Then suddenly she left him.

He watched her as she moved away. He saw her go to meet the captain, and stand talking with that official for a considerable time. Ever and again, the captain put out his hands protestingly. Then Pat reached something to him. He took it, nodded, and walked rapidly away.

Pat went in her own direction, and, after a little, Pete went to his stateroom, in order to go to bed. Pat was already in her berth, breathing heavily.

In the morning the ship was ahum with new life. Cries from fore and aft. Running of feet. A long scream of the siren. Peter asked a passenger what the matter was. "Going to transfer mail. See yonder." Sure enough—Peter had not beheld it. A ship that had come, no doubt, out of the Mediterranean. In course of time Peter could see that it bore the United States flag. He gave three cheers, and others joined him. Again, and the cheers rang out from the whole ship.

Peter's heart was pounding with excitement. If only he could have gone upon that ship! It was, no doubt, bound straight for New York. But first he must go to London. No London, no—anything. Yes, first he must go to London.

He leaned into the rushing wind and gazed hard ahead. Why, the ship's very name was "New

York." Hooray! Hooray! Again he was joined by hundreds of throats.

Both the ships slowed down, came to absolute rest at just a little distance from each other.

The transfer boat with the mail in it was lowered to the water. The boat was stacked high with mail, and two or three men were moving about in it. There was also one motionless, golden-headed woman.

For a second the heart of Peter Samuels leaped into his mouth. "You! You!" he cried, in spite of himself.

The woman turned slowly round. It was Pat. She looked Peter full in the eye for a moment, languidly lifted a hand a little, as if she felt that she really ought to greet him somehow. Then she turned her wonderful face away from him and toward the "New York." And the last that Peter Samuels saw of the mail boat and its cargo was the burnished gold of Patricia Samuels' hair.

He did not wait to observe the boat coming back, or the "New York" getting under way again for America.

He gained, somehow, the stern of the vessel, sat there looking backward into the sea, backward, backward.

He was aware of nobody. Neither did he see at all the outer world around. He might, had he been so minded, have caught one last long look at vanishing Africa. There it lay, slipping into the past, slipping, slipping, away, away, on down behind the round rim of the earth. But it slipped out of sight,

even the last fronded palm-tree, and Peter did not behold.

He saw neither sea nor sky, nor anything at all that was of this outer world. He was in a world all, all his own—alone, alone.

He proceeded to London, left the jewels there as by former arrangement, crossed to New York. In that city five long days. Then—stateroom out for Starlight.

On the second day, as he leaned from his stateroom window—on the left hand side of the train it was, he had seen well to that—he caught the first plain glimpse of Starlight smoke. Peter received in a flash a vivid recollection of all his African experiences—a ten-second panorama with life and death—helpless life and helpless death—astir in it. Then—only the smoke and clouds of Starlight. That was all he saw now, just Starlight.

CHAPTER XXIV

Let Us Lick (and Love) Our Enemies

Peter, in his warm, imaginative way, had often pictured to himself his return to Starlight. Always he had seen himself going back on a beautiful day. The people of that city might know nothing (should, of course, be wholly ignorant) of his great success, but nature, at least, ought to understand all about it, ought always to be singing his hallelujahs.

In the morning he had believed that this would surely happen, for the skies were bright with sun and with silvery cumuli. But the day, which had been so very joyous and sunny, slowly grew leaden and cold, and ever more leaden and colder as the miles diminished between himself and Starlight. By the time he had entered the city limits, heavy rain was falling. The whole great town looked drab, disconsolate. At all events Peter had found the jewels, and the plain written evidence of the vast loan which he had effected on their security, lay calm, cosy and warm in his inside coat pocket. Then, too, very shortly, he would reach the old home—Pat on the steps, waiting, holding out her hand. Pat would be all right again. Nothing like these northern constellations, the cool, clear air beneath them.

He left the train, and, so eager he was to exert himself that he carried his own large, heavy satchels.

They seemed to him like bits of fluffy paper. Overhead, on the trainshed roof, the rain was drumming, drumming, drumming. Just before he reached the midway who should come up behind him with a little Boston bag which he was twirling and twirling but Grindon Grounch? What made Grounch so frivolously active?

He ran past Peter a little, then, as if by a remembered impulse, turned and said, sweetly smiling: "I have a conundrum for you, Mr. Samuels. What is the difference between the chink of the coin and the coin of the Chink?" Then his smile faded. He fell back a step or two and slunk solemnly away.

But Peter too was staggered. In his heart arose a great, overmastering fear. This, a moment later, passed into furious hate, which, had it lasted long, would surely (so he thought) have burned up his brain. The anger, though, died promptly away, the agitation appearing as quite another form of energy. Plans and projects! If Grindon Grounch were thinking of joining battle with Peter Samuels, the latter would be found a strategist well prepared.

But how much did Grounch know? And what would he do with his information, even supposing that he knew all?

"Hello, Pete! Been wishin' for ye a long time. An' so I got my dues at last."

It was really Burley. Peter attempted to pass him by, without so much as even a salutation. But Burley would not be passed. "Where you been, Pete?"

"Looking after business. This world is full of business—one's own and that of others."

Then Burley: "I got my car here, and I'm gonna take you straight to my office."

Peter looked at the man with the utmost astonishment. "Burley," said he, "I must go to see Pat at once. I've just been gone—" He told Burley exactly how long his absence had extended.

"I know," responded Burley. "But it's not that long since you seen Pat. She's been over to our house, Pat has, and, accordin' to what she tells Elizabeth, I reckon she don't much care to see you any quicker than's absolutely necessary. Now, old buck, don't be flamin' so Turkey red, either. All women's like that, 'Lizabeth 'mongst 'em. Told me, just the other day, Liz did, to get out o' the house. Hadn't been six weeks then sence I j'ined church either. Pete, I j'ined. I sure did. Converted. Quit drinkin', smokin', playin' poker, an' stayin' out nights. Sorry I had to j'ine while *you* was out o' Starlight. But that there young mathematical preacher kind o' figured me into it.

"Here's the wagon." He pointed to a high-powered, luxurious machine, and, as Peter began to look another way, said soothingly: "Come along, Pete. I can tell you how to get Church Rock."

Peter looked at the man as if he had really declared, "I will show you where you can get millions upon millions of dollars." Burley seemed absolutely in earnest, and Church Rock— He must, if possible,

acquire Church Rock. Then he could get the jewels back immediately.

As Pete entered the car, he nonchalantly asked: "Did Patricia tell either you or Elizabeth where she and I had gone?"

"Not a syllable. Rest easy." After a long time of silence, "She's too good business woman do that. She just says, says she, 'I've come back from a terrible place, where I'd gone see Peter. I can't tell where, nor does the place of meeting signify. All that matters is, that my husband is much changed.' Then she started to cry— There she is now."

They were passing, sure enough, "The Shanty," and there, on the steps, stood golden-headed Pat.

Had it been his one last deed, Peter Samuels had not been able to restrain himself. So Pat had cried, had she? Poor Pat! Poor child! He leaned from the car, and, as they glided by, called out in his rich sweet tenor: "Starlight and Pat again!"

Pat looked up, saw. One wild gleam of joyous recognition shot over her features. Then she seemed frozen to ice. A look of disdain came upon her. She turned quickly, and went into the house.

An image of her face, as she thus turned away, went into Peter's mind and stayed there. It remained with him, like a rough, rankling dart, all the way to Burley's office. Even there it did not leave him once, but kept rankling, rankling. He did not think to pity her now. He simply blamed. Suppose he *had* gone by the house without stopping. Even had

business not been pressing, what could a woman expect who had treated her husband as Pat had treated hers—there, that day, when she had left him on the ocean, left him without a word, gone her own gait, while he, for all she cared, was at liberty to go—hence. Was she angry because, forsooth, he had pawned the jewels? Well then he would tell her—Yes, he would *tell* her that it was she who first had said that he should pawn them, insisted that he should do so, said the church could never be built otherwise, phoned him—there at the bank—to that very effect. Afterwards urged the matter, repeatedly, and, when he had given in, had praised him for so doing. If that was what was ailing her, he would tell her plainly. She should face the truth, look at her own sin as well as his—if sin it were. It was even more hers than his, at any rate. "What do you want, Burley?"

"Wait till we get to the office."

When they had gone into Burley's place and sat down, Burley admitted: "Pete, while you been gone, I done you dirt."

"Very likely."

"Don't get sarcastic, but listen. Else I'll slam the stuffin' out o' you." He grinned to show that, while this, of course, was perfectly possible in a mere physical sense, yet he was only referring to the matter by way of endearment.

"How did you know, Burley, when I was going to get in?"

"Grounch."

"O! Grounch!"

"That's the man. There's not another soul in Starlight keeps better posted on your movements. Facts is, Grounch keeps well posted on the movements of a *number* of Starlight's prominent citizens. I ain't sayin' that I've got anything to fear from him, him or anybody else. But a many *has*. Kind o' inquisitive, Grounch. Tells *me* it *pays* him to nose about a little. Says it's really surprisin', the men you wouldn't think it of, how little they can stand investigation. Helps Grounch in his office, he says. Gets lots more prosecutin' to do in that way. Also it lets him make people do his way. By the bye, he's gettin' rich, Grindon. I don't understand why he keeps on bein' prosecutor—'less 'cause he loves the prosecutin' so.

"The way to get rich, Grounch says, is to know—know about people. I've a kind of idee that, when people *can't* be prosecuted (just because he can't quite get the full necessary evidence) that then he shows 'em secretly some of the evidence that he *has* got, and then, they not bein' lawyers, and not knowin' no different, go ahead an' buy him off. *But,* when he's really got the goods on anybody—say, Pete, you couldn't no more buy that man not to prosecute than you could buy Satan to let you off from hell. Punishment's not his business, it's his profession, his heart's love, his everything. Quash a case he didn't have to? Not no more'n Kreisler'd smash his own violin, if he had to play for nothin'. Say, that's a good violin too, Pete."

"Burley," said Peter, "quit rambling. What did you say you brought me here for?"

"Slow and steady. Sl-o-o-w and steady."

Peter rose with irritation.

"All right, stand then. Pete, I done you dirt. Done it while you was away. And yet I didn't mean to hurt you none, really. I sold Church Rock."

"Church Rock! You? You sold? You don't mean to tell me that you sold your interest in Church Rock?"

"Aha. Sold it. Didn't half think when I did."

Peter was shaking, simply shaking from his badly knocking heels to his jerky black head. Church Rock had become, with him, an extremely sore and sensitive subject. He folded his arms, however, to keep himself in check. Then he questioned again. "To whom did you sell?"

"Grindon Grounch."

Burley did not know that Peter was wanting the control of Church Rock in order that he might be able to build from the stone of its quarries a new and supremely magnificent Peter Samuels church. He did, however, thoroughly understand that, for at least financial reasons, his old time friend and comrade had desired the controlling interest in this property. And Peter, of course, on his part, knew well that Burley knew that. He actually took a step toward Burley. Then he halted, choked down his choler. "You know I've always wanted Church Rock."

"Yes. I knowed. And I soon repented. I can't tell you all the way I felt in this matter, Pete, after I did repent. But I sure repented. I really got sorry I done you dirt."

To Burley the expression he had used was only as the chastest of English. He knew no better words. To Peter, however, it seemed, in his then state of mind, like sheer intentional levity, employed on purpose to annoy, to exasperate, and to humiliate him. Still he kept his arms very tightly together, and gave only a golden reply. "Sorry, William. Sorry. It would have meant so much to me."

Burley was deeply moved. He saw in Peter's manner the extreme vexation he had so unintentionally produced, and felt to the full what an effort it must have cost his old-time friend to speak so gently, with so very much restraint. He went on—

"I got a surprise for you, though—a great surprise."

"One upon another, William."

"Yes, one upon another. But this is one you'll like. Say, Pete, an old maid died lately, here in Starlight, name Miss Peascod. I was witness to her will. You remember them twelve shares o' Church Rock that never could be accounted for? Them twelve shares was hern. I was witness to her will, but never knowed she owned the shares till lately, the will only sayin': 'All I own I leave,' etc."

Peter gave a great gasp of astonishment. "Hers? Miss Peascod's? To whom did she leave them? To

you? If she did, they're just the same as Grindon Grounch's." He was once more shaking. "But, my most excellent and friendly Mr. Burley, I beg to inform you that a bequest made to the witness of a will is absolutely and irretrievably void."

Burley laughed. "She never left me nuthin'. Nobody ain't never left me nuthin'. All of Miss Peascod's property goes, includin' the twelve lost shares in Church Rock, to the Oak Park Orphans' Home."

"The Oak Park Orphans' Home!"

Peter looked like a demon, and Burley stepped back.

" 'The Oak Park Orphans' Home,' did you say?"

Burley nodded. "You can buy 'em easily off the trustees."

"Burley, you damned fool! You outrageous—scoundrel!"

"I ain't no scoundrel," shouted Burley, himself suddenly in a rage—which burned all the hotter because he had really intended doing Peter a great service, and was now deeply mistrusted for his pains. "What you say I'm a damn scoundrel for? Take it back. You take that back!"

"You're a scoundrel because you *knew* that Grindon Grounch was not only one of the trustees for the Home, but that he's also the Home's attorney. Will Grindon Grounch sell that stock to me? Grindon Grounch! Burley, you knew, you knew— And you brought me here just to tell me—to—tantalize me—even before you let me go to my house—you

brought me here. You're a fool sir, a damned fool and a scoundrel besides."

"I tell you I didn't *know*. And you take back that scoundrel too. Take it back, you God damn son of a *Dago* bitch!"

He threw himself upon Peter.

It was really a pitiful affair. Size and strength against equal size and greater strength, and immeasurably greater activity and skill.

When Peter had finished the job, he laid his friend on a lounge, and, going to a tap, wetted a towel and returned with it. Then with how great tenderness he washed the blood from William's features.

Peter had become ashamed, deeply and fearfully ashamed. He had been attacked, true enough, yet he himself had really provoked the onslaught. There had been no real necessity for this battle. He felt quite mellow toward Burley now.

Burley regained consciousness. Then he said, as a full realization of all the truth came over him, "You licked me fair, Pete."

Pete could not answer, but kept on wiping blood away.

"You licked me fair, Pete. And you had good cause to lick me. You—you always *wuz* fair, Peter." After a little, he added: "I no business to sailed into you, Pete. I see now how it looked to you, as if I'd just invited you up here to gloat and glory over you. But honest to goodness, Pete, I didn't know that Grounch was the attorney for that Home, nor even a trustee. I done you dirt, Pete, when I

sold my stock to Grounch. But I meant to *get* you them twelve shares that used to belong to Miss Peascod. I meant to *get* 'em fer you, Pete. Some day, I'll prove it. Wait. Just wait. Some day."

A great tear welled up from his worst eye, rolled slowly down his purple cheek.

Peter was so sorry that he could almost have kissed the battered face—after the Italian fashion. He well knew that Burley, in spite of his physical limitations, was not, at heart, very bad. Coarse he was, in truth, but not really bad. "I'm sorry," he said, his voice trembling. Then he was both sorry and ashamed that his voice had trembled.

"Peter, that was an awful name I called you. Your mother was all right." Peter touched his hand and left.

CHAPTER XXV

Chris, in Whose Hands—

When Pete left Burley's room he went down to the street door, and simply stood there for a while. It was raining with such fury that he could not see a foot before his face. All this added to his gloom and the hatred he had for Pat. Even the tenderness he had just been feeling toward Burley was fast oozing away. When the air brightened a little, he signaled a taxi, and almost with a curse. Before the vehicle could quite arrive Burley stepped from the elevator to Peter's side bringing Peter's heavy satchels, and offering once again the use of his own car. Peter refused gruffly, stepped into the taxi, and, as the chauffeur lifted his satchels to their place in the front of the vehicle, named a large hotel on State House Square.

Arrived at the hostelry, he engaged a suite of rooms, and, having taken a bath and shaved himself, went into an adjoining restaurant and ate. After that he went up stairs to bed, not so much as phoning to Mrs. Samuels his whereabouts.

In the morning he arose in a still harder frame of mind. Not wishing to meet Patricia, or even to speak to her, in this surly mood, he proceeded, as soon as he had eaten breakfast, to the office of the Secretary of State.

Old Chris was a great toiler, and, though it still lacked full two hours of opening time, he was already hard, hard at work, filing batches upon batches of new laws—the great and ever increasing grist of the Starlight legislative mill.

Peter called to him, and he turned—dropped a whole sheaf of new enactments. "Monty!" he cried. "My Monty! Have you seen Monty?" He became immediately unconscious.

Peter helped him to a lounge, and brought him a cup of water. "You have not seen Monty," were the secretary's first words.

"Yes, I have seen him," said Peter. "I promised you that, if Monty were still on earth, I would find him, would give him your message, and would surely recover the jewels without publicity, if they were still in existence."

"You *saw* him?"

"I saw him."

"But in death. I know— I had a terrible dream—"

"I saw him. I saw him, dear old friend, both in life and in death. Stand up now. You can take it better so. That's the way. Lean on me and walk about, while I talk to you. So. I will help you. I will always help you, Chris.

"Both in life and in death. Both in life and in death I saw him." Peter related all the circumstances.

When he had finished, Christopher Muggins drew himself up proudly and said: "So you recovered the

jewels, Peter Samuels, and my son's reputation (though he himself is departed) remains. And it remains before all the world a stainless thing, as stainless as snow."

"It does truly," said Peter.

"My God! And I once held you for an enemy! Pardon me, Peter. Pardon me, my God. Pardon me, O shade of the best son that ever trod this earth." He sobbed again, and Peter let him have his way, knowing that it was better so.

"Peter, I have sinned terribly against you."

"It is true, Chris. I was your best—"

"And yet you went—you went the whole of the way to the continent of Africa—just—just to protect the reputation of my sweet Monty—to get those jewels back, also to keep the matter a secret. Why, Peter, you could have let the jewels go, and not have been to blame in the least about it. Did you not say that the jewels were not yours, that you merely held them in a trust?"

"It is true. I held them in trust."

"Had you told the Pinkerton man, had you told him about Monty—"

"It is true. I needed not to do anything more."

"But then Monty's reputation would have suffered. Also, Monty himself would no less surely have died."

"It is probably true."

"And you went to Africa, just for me, just for Monty. Not for self, Peter. You would have saved him too, not merely his reputation, if he had not so

incontinently fled from you with him that was wholly unworthy. You would gladly have saved both Monty and his reputation. But you couldn't save both. You have done what you could. Forgive me, Peter."

Peter felt inclined to laugh at the old man's somewhat childish insistence on a complete analysis of a perfectly simple situation. He forebore, however, and, presently, in one of the old man's numerous pauses, he gently insinuated: "Did I not promise, Chris?"

"You promised. And listen to me, Peter. If ever you yourself get into trouble, no matter what, and Christopher Muggins can help you—"

"I will let you know."

Peter stooped and kissed Christopher Muggins on the forehead. Then he went away.

"Yes, I will let you know," he kept on saying to himself, all the while, as he moved across State House Square and in the direction of his bank. "I will let you know. Yes, I will most assuredly let you know.—I believe I am going to need you, Chris—though I can't, for the life of me, now say just what for."

CHAPTER XXVI

Building on the Law

As he approached the Peter Samuels bank, the great First National of Starlight, the façade of that remarkable institution did not, somehow, seem quite so magically immense and enormously imposing as always it had seemed before. "A new building," murmured Peter. "We must have a new building soon. This rattle-trap thing—small town stuff now. We must assuredly have a new building."

The bank was already open, and, as Peter entered, Toplofty came smiling to greet him. "Gone for ages, Mr. Samuels. Missed you. But business has run along in just the way that might have been expected." Peter responded gruffly, and, in response to all the greetings that began to shower on him from various portions of the lobby, he made short answers. Almost as if he had had a grudge against his own bank, walked he among his customers and employes. It was a gauntlet that had to be some time run, run it now. That was his idea. Some of his oldest friends stepped promptly toward him, and then, hearing how he spoke to other old friends, moved softly away and did not speak with him at all.

He went, as soon as he well could, into his own little room, and there, at his desk, soon lost himself in a book on banking law. After a time he picked

up a digest, hummed a little, got up and walked about the room. Then he exclaimed, aloud: "I must know this matter more specifically." He phoned to the bank's attorneys—Jackson and Johnson. "Have you such and such reports and So-and-so's *Criminal Procedure?*" "Yes, Mr. Samuels. Want to see them?" "Send them down at once." The volumes came, and Peter turned to the sections and the cases which dealt with the subject of venue. "Just as I supposed," he gloated. "Old Grindon couldn't begin to have the trial here, for this is not the venue. I—embezzled—those stones in London. Hence, only in London could I be tried. True it is that Grounch could tell the London authorities all about me. But what could *they* do? Extradite me? Perhaps. Difficult proceeding though, in the case of a man like me: cost them plenty of money. Moreover, the firm from whom I borrowed on the jewels would use its influence to stop the prosecution. They wouldn't like either to have it known that they had been hoodwinked by me, or to destroy the credit and financial ability of the very man upon whose standing they would have to rely after the title to the stones had been clearly demonstrated on the trial to be in some other person than himself. They would beg time for me: I should naturally get it. And that's all I need, just time."

He went and stared out through his window. There came again all the old company, the crowds, the multitudes. Just as before—Americans both white and black, also "the Argentines, the Portuguese, and the Greeks."

A knock at his door. "Come in." He was somehow a little astonished at the iron firmness of his own voice.

Entered Tony, poor little Tony who had lost Bambina and acquired a fruit store. Tony laid down a check for a hundred odd dollars. "What you lent me. Also all the eenterest."

"Good boy, Tony." He came near adding, "I had only intended this as a gift," but in time forebore.

"I pay also Meester Boorley—now—thees now. I pay. All, eet ees pay."

"You have paid Mr. Burley too? Well enough, Tony, well enough. Success attend you, old man. Glad to see that you do your depositing in the Starlight First National."

"Here, and *also* een the Second. I owe to each, to both, some theeng. I try always pay."

"You're a good man, Tony. Tony, did you know that I am part Italian? My mother."

"I hear 'bout dat. Splendeed! Magneeficent! Hoorah for de 'Talian blood! We all win some day. Say, Meester Samuels, some day, we 'Talians, we Dagos, we own de whole—what you say?—shootin' de match—de whole Starlight—ever' time."

"Very likely, Tony. Here's your receipt."

Tony began to whistle. Peter laughed. The tune was, "Portuguese and the Greeks."

"Some time, mebbe, I help dees bank. Not a yet. Not yet able. Some time, mebbe, I help."

"All right, Tony. Good-bye. See you keep on continuing and continue keeping on."

Tony left, very happy. But he at once came back. "Mebbe I help deze bank right now. Meester Samuels, one day, long tam back, I in de alley jest behine disa bank. See. Backa dere. And dere I see two smalla hooks onto *your* two wires, deeza wires, deeza here right a now wires, what run from deez phone. So somebody dey what-you-call, dey tap-a your wires. Eet eez even now tap. I tell you before, but you so long time gone. I see it jezza before you go 'way. How long it been dere? I don't know. I not see de hooks trow over. I would have tell rez' of bank, but I don't know—how dey take de tell. But you, I sure. I tell."

Peter could hardly speak. "All right, Tony. Thanks. I will see. Say nothing to any one else."

"I helpa deeza bank?"

"You have helped me, Tony, helped me very much. Not the bank, me."

"All a right. Some tam I help deze bank." And he strutted out.

In the lobby, good little Tony showed his two receipts in full, both of them, that from Meester Burley and that from Meester Samuels also—showed them and fully explained to each and all the customers that would stop for a moment to hear him. Then he went the rounds of all the bank's employes, showing and fully explaining that now, thees very morning, he had fully paid and with interest both the two kinds of moneys he had borrowed when he had embarked in a commercial venture for himself. "Italiano, Dago," he exclaimed to old Toplofty.

"Yet I pay. See now, I pay. I hef paid. Some day I help deeza bank."

"It is not the thing which we might have expected," commented the cashier. "And for that very reason all the more I congratulate you. Hereafter we shall expect from you still greater things."

"Greatera teengs isa right." And away he went to further victories, dreaming the while of pews for his children's families, some day, in the Peter Samuels church.

Peter, meanwhile, had paced his floor in agony. As soon as Tony, poor lingering, loitering Tony, had finally gone, forth came Peter, and, taking the elevator to the uppermost floor, gazed cautiously forth from a deserted room. There—he could see them plainly. Two little spiderweb-like wires, just tiny bits of wire across his own, tapping no doubt all his supposedly private messages. The wires ran to a window of an adjoining office-building. Grindon Grounch, of course. No one else would have cared to do this.

How long had those wires been there? That was a most important question. According to Tony, they might have been actively working on the day when he, Peter, had frankly said to Pat, over this very wire, that he, even Peter Samuels, had already taken the jewels, had in fact converted them to his own use. That was, of course, before Monty had robbed him of them. Thus, very plainly, Grounch could easily prove (supposing that he had had an agent, that memorable Fourth of July, "listening

in'') that the venue of the embezzlement was Starlight and not London. That gave Grounch a terrible grip upon him, an almost indefeasible advantage. Peter could be tried in Starlight—that is, if Grindon actually knew. For a time Peter pondered.

He came back down to the banking floor, and his little room thereon. Softly he was whistling to himself.

More law books sent for. Federal Reporter, Volume XII, together with various Starlight reports. These came, were duly inspected and pondered, then returned joyfully.

''Shades of Kent and Blackstone!'' almost shouted Peter, when the messenger had departed. ''How easy it is to do just as you like—when you have a good friend—'' He actually pointed toward the State House. After a while he murmured, ''I *knew* I could use him.''

So Peter Samuels was building strong and deep on a basis of human law.

For a time he sang almost jauntily. Then he sent for Bronson and Bronson, architects. And when these gentlemen, responding with alacrity, had arrived, Peter went into consultation with them on the subject of a great new church. ''Not exactly a church either,'' Peter explained, ''but a fifty-four-story bank and office building combined with a church on top. Got something like it in one of the eastern cities already. But this must beat that, beat the whole record, smash it into little dust. Now you listen.'' He gave a wonderfully fine outline of how

the imposing structure should appear. In conclusion, "So, you see, away up there, just under the blue sky, is to be the topmost institution—God's holy church. Then, immediately beneath, innumerable offices, wherefrom God's church is to draw its sustenance. All good churches must be founded on business. And, underneath the offices, the bank. Do you understand?"

They did. They would take the matter to their own humble offices, there to brood over it. And, when the incubation was complete, they would return at the first suggestion by Peter, and thereupon exhibit to the great man's astonished eyes their wonderful brood. "We have your thought, Mr. Samuels, and will try to project a structure that will—that will—" They were absolutely paralyzed when they tried to tell this exalted, this supremely opulent, personage just what the great new building might be supposed to look like.

"Good-bye, Mr. Samuels."

"Bye."

CHAPTER XXVII

The Failing Magnolia

Weeks went past before Peter could bring himself to go home again. There must, of course, have been some sharp talk round about Starlight with regard to this, his very extraordinary and long extended absence from his wife, Peter living all the while at a near-by inn. But whatsoever may have been said, none of the sayings ever came to the ears of Peter Samuels. Even crude Bill Burley did not mention the matter to him. And, one day, when the head of the Starlight First National Bank had picked up yet another bunch of Starlight and Southeastern stock for next to nothing, and was feeling correspondingly jubilant, he decided to go home again. Go back he must, of course, some day.

It was a beautiful afternoon. Never, he thought, had sun been brighter on the walls and in the streets of Starlight. The old grinding wrench and roar which had always made such music in his soul, was wrenching and grinding louder than ever, and it awakened, on this very notable day, a feeling of still greater power than ever before in his strongly beating heart.

He passed his silently sleeping church—*his* church, at which fine edifice, however, he had not attended one single meeting since he had got back to Star-

light. The little flowers in the grass plot held up their heads, endeavoring to tell him the messages which all flowers bear for those who love the Lord of flowers. But Peter saw them not. Little soft winds stirred in the bushes, saying to Peter how very much they were like the viewless angels, and how greatly God had relied upon him, Peter Samuels. But Peter did not hear.

Those who passed him, spoke, but not quite as of old. "Afternoon, Mr. Samuels." "Mr. Samuels, how do you do?" So on. They were surely more respectful than ever they had been before. They were feeling his power now, doubtless, feeling it in grim, dead earnest. Very well. Let them be more respectful still. They had probably heard of his victories in Starlight and Southeastern, numerous other matters also. Burley seemed a small competitor now, hardly worth mentioning. The only man Peter still feared in Starlight was Grindon Grounch. He would have to take the starch completely out of Grounch. All in good time, all in good time.

He had come to "The Shanty" corner and stepped on his own walk. What a strange feeling! Uncle Henry's voice rose once again sweet and clear from behind the garage. Peter must use the garage soon. This talk of Straight's about walking, ceaselessly walking—stuff! Why he was as strong as—as the great magnolia yonder, just to one side of the front door: the bright magnolia that Pat had always compared to himself, had always said was a kind of

symbol, or emblem, of him, Peter Samuels. Well now, that was always damned kind of Patricia.

He came up to the great, straight, strong-looking tree, and stood with a happy feeling in its broad, flickering shade. What a wonderful, wonderful tree! That had really been quite fine of Patricia! He heard a grating noise, then a kind of groaning which slowly ascended to a terrible, heart-breaking sob. He listened intent, unable to determine the source, or even the exact direction, of the fearful sob. "Pat! O Pat!" He thought, for a moment, that Pat must be near by, either groaning or sobbing.

A wave of contrition, of deep remorse, swept over him. Thenafter, dismay.

He stepped to the big door—found it open. Pulling the screen aside, he entered the hall.

No one in sight. There was the great clock, that had once belonged to Patricia's father's grandfather—tick-tocking away, tick-tocking away. How little did time care for the go and come of mortals.

He was just on the point of shouting once again, "Pat! O Pat!" when it seemed that he caught the limpid murmur of Patricia's placid syllables—out yonder, in the yard. He walked through the house. Out on the back porch. Nobody.

He got off the porch, and, hearing Pat and Uncle Henry speaking quietly together, rounded a corner of his dwelling, and there, bent intently over a rose bush—Pat. Uncle Henry, plainly enough, had just turned away, and now was en route once more to the regions on the farther side of the garage. Peter

did not call to him. Henry, plainly, did not know that he had come. In any case Henry very soon disappeared.

Pat was so postured that her back was toward Peter. Peter felt that this was intentional, that Patricia must undoubtedly have heard him calling for her, just now, as he had come up to the front door. O very well! He would not hurry. He believed, in fact, that he would let Patricia speak first.

Just as he formed this resolution, his wife turned and spoke. "Peter," said she, "I wish you'd get some one to attend to that magnolia tree. It seems very straight and healthy and vigorous and all that, but it's really rotten at the heart."

Peter was astonished beyond measure. For a time he did not utter a syllable.

Patricia went on. "Listen! You can hear it now. It's groaning, just fairly crying out for some sort of attention. There's a big rift in its trunk at one place, and so decay has crept in."

"I'll phone somebody," said Peter, as he went back into the house.

He did not phone, but went at once to his study. In an hour his things came down from the hotel, and he busied himself for a while rearranging articles in his room. His Latin blood was pulsing warmly. This, then, was the man who was returning to his sweetheart after—so long a time.

He went and looked into a glass. Then he recalled the face he had seen in the Pullman window, while on his way to Africa. "Good God!" he exclaimed,

fairly aloud. "Can any man go the Starlight gait, to say nothing of the African, and turn up looking like a cherub? If that's what bothers Mrs. Samuels, she can get herself unbothered."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Mr. Prosecutor and Mr. Secretary

A great crime wave was inundating the State, the land, the world. Starlight was especially affected. Grounch was in his native element. Factions were absolutely forgotten. People wanted crime—other people's crime of course—put down. There was an end of the matter. It must be put down. Peter had tried to prevent the re-election of Grindon Grounch, but had strangely failed. He had, however, helped old Chris to retain his office. Grounch was really the man of the hour. Especially he could be trusted to prosecute the bigger and more respectable violators of the law. Rumor had it that many lesser men had paid this fellow much hush-money. No difference at all. He at all events got the big fellows. Those are what we chiefly want. Give Grounch the evidence against some gigantic chap, some financial king or other, evidence concerning which there could be no possible doubt or question, and Grounch would inevitably prosecute. He was a born prosecutor, so everybody said. And what the people wanted, in the present hour, was a man that had been born to prosecute.

Now, in these days, when Peter had been back in Starlight for nearly two years, and Grounch was prosecuting like a veritable inquisitor of Spain,

Christopher Muggins one day took an alarm, and went to call on the prosecuting attorney.

It had likewise happened, long before this, even in the year when Peter Samuels was in Africa, that old Christopher Muggins had taken his snowy beard to Grounch. And on that memorable occasion he had spoken volubly and beseechingly, not to say pathetically and eloquently, in behalf of his one dear son, his sweetest little Monty.

How he had wept on Grounch's rug, his table, his shoulder! And, when he had wept himself clean out, and could speak coherently, then Grindon Grounch began to cross-question him—not with violence, or even with any implied aggression, but in a kind, sympathetic, and almost fatherly manner. Yet Muggins was much the older man.

"What is it Monty did?"

"You see he had a pal."

"Yes."

"And Monty and his pal—" Here a number of dry sobs.

After a time, Grounch: "And what did they do? There, there, Mr. Muggins. It can't be so terribly bad as all that. Tell me what they did, your son and his bad pal. The best way is to make a clean breast of the matter. I assure you of my good will. What, now, did they do?"

"They tried to murder Peter Samuels."

"So *they* were the men." That much he actually said. He also thought, "Would to God they had succeeded. I'd like to try it myself."

After a while Chris again began. "I sold you that stock when Peter Samuels wanted it—wanted it with all his heart and soul. He wanted it to build a great church with, that's what he wanted it for. Wanted it to honor God with. How do I know? He told me so himself."

This design, on Peter's part, to build a great church was, of course, already known to Grounch, thanks to the tappers of Peter's telephone wire; yet Christopher's story was corroborative evidence. Grounch was glad to have it. "I remember," Grounch replied, very soothingly, "the night you sold me the stock. It was a very kind act. You may be sure that I never have forgotten the kindness."

Chris looked up as if he had just heard an angel. "You never have forgotten? You never will forget? Then save my Monty. Save him."

"You have not even told me yet what else Monty did, Monty and his accomplice."

"They did not succeed in killing Peter Samuels, but they robbed him."

"They robbed him!"

Muggins nodded.

"Of what?"

The Secretary of State paused for an appreciable moment. "Chinese jewels. They robbed him of wonderful jewels which had been left with him in trust."

Now Grindon Grounch, as said before, was a born prosecutor. Yet, too, like many another lawyer,

good or bad, he was also a human being. So, when Christopher Muggins uttered those astounding vocables, "Chinese jewels," Grounch's heart (speaking again about the physical organ only) gave a big bounce upward, then stopped beating. For a long time, as it appeared to Grounch, the blood pump of his system seemed on the point of renouncing its work forever. Then again it went back to its job, very slowly at first: "One—two—three!" Would it ever beat any further? "Four—five—six!" Just a little faster now. Then it became normal again.

And Grindon Grounch, in his memory chamber, beheld once more the aged Chinaman who had come to see him on a far distant day. What a wrinkled, yellow old chap he had been! And he had said to Grindon Grounch, after speaking of the trust which he had reposed in Peter Samuels: "If Mr. Samuels is the Christian I take him to be, he will answer the young man: 'Here are the stones.' And he will give him the stones. If he does not give him the stones, the claimant (my descendant) will come here to you and will ask your help to recover them."

Something else came into the memory chamber of Grindon Grounch—the scene wherein Peter Samuels had prevented the hanging by Monty Muggins of the old African, Ephraim Morrison. That motivated the robbery: the attempted murder was probably only incidental. Grounch also recalled that his "listeners in" on Peter's wire had had great trouble with Monty Muggins, who had often come into their

room and done some listening on his own account. They had not been able to repulse him as they really wanted to do, because the fellow, one day, in passing down the alley, had spied out their tap-wires neatly thrown over and hooked to the wires of Peter Samuels. They had had to let him hang about their room a little, when they found this out, to keep him from reporting the whole situation to Peter. Monty had even been present on that memorable Fourth of July when Peter's confession to his wife that he had taken the jewels from the vault to his own private office, had passed not only to the Samuels "Shanty" but also, in tones that were clear and unmistakable, into the listening-room where Monty Muggins sat. This, then, was how the fellow had known that Peter had a fortune in jewels there beside him in his little private office.

Grounch looked up with an expression of incomparable kindness and respect. "How, Mr. Secretary, did you come to know these things?"

"Monty told me. Came to brag that he had got even with our family enemy. You had made me believe that Peter was really that. I, in turn, had made poor Monty believe it. You, therefore, Mr. Prosecutor, it is very plain I hope, were really the cause of his crime."

Grounch ignored the accusation. "Why was the prosecuting officer not informed about these things?"

"No one knew but me and Peter. Would *I* tell? No. Would Peter? No—and for the very reason

that he was *not* my enemy or my son's. Why, Peter loved Monty! Long, long years ago—"

Grounch ceased following the secretary's words. He beheld again a vision of Peter Samuels teaching and training Monty Muggins to be a missionary in Africa. Suddenly Grounch stood up straight and looked afar.

"Anything the matter, Mr. Grounch?"

Grounch did not answer. What had happened was this. The lawyer was quite as good as Peter Samuels when it came to putting two and two together, or, as one might more accurately phrase it, almost any quantities at all. And he had suddenly seen, as a result of his various combinations—Africa: Africa, with Monty Muggins thither fled, and Peter Samuels (on account of his keen, shrewd insight into human plans and motives) gone thither after him. Peter had been gone from Starlight a long time: he knew that. It was really an enchanting picture. Grindon Grounch kept looking at it. Peter Samuels, as Grounch kept watching the vision, caught Monty Muggins and recovered the jewels. That was inevitable. Then the picture became dimmer. Grounch lost sight of Muggins in it—just as he knew that Peter himself would do, whatsoever he might tell Chris upon his return to America. America? Of a sudden, a change came over the picture. Now, Peter had lost Church Rock, and had secretly embezzled the jewels that he might thereon borrow money enough to help him build the church. So much the lawyer knew from the tapping of Peter's

wire. But Peter (as Grounch's men had caught Peter's message to Patricia) had not said a word as to where the said Peter would borrow. So, all of a sudden, Grindon Grounch's picture changed. He beheld Peter in London. Peter—negotiating a loan, the jewels being pledged as security. Why London? *Must* be *some* enormous city. Large loans cannot be had in small towns. *And* London, being farther away from Starlight, was safer than New York.

All these mental proceedings, which take so long a time to tell, had occurred in a very few seconds. Yet so certain had the prosecutor been that he knew precisely where Peter Samuels then was, that he did not even trouble Christopher Muggins with a question on that head. He had given his word again to Christopher, "Your son shall not be punished." And Chris had gone off happy, and the lawyer, without Chris's knowledge, had set the Pinkertons to work. These had brought him the news of Peter's loan in London—a loan on rubies whose value was well-nigh inestimable.

But still, there was one weak link in Grounch's chain of evidence. He needed the Chinese heir, the proper claimant of the jewels. It might be exceedingly difficult, in the absence of this man, to establish the proper ownership of the rubies and so to convict Peter Samuels. Much as Grounch loved to convict big men, he would take no chances on juries. In fact, the bigger the man the more certainty the prosecutor must have. He must be able to establish undoubted

ownership. Till then, till the young Chinaman should appear and should lay claim to his immense possessions, Grounch could only grit his teeth and condemn the Chinaman's tardiness. Sometimes he thought, "What if this young person should be dead? What if, for any reason, he never should come at all?" On such occasions he shuddered and sweated profusely.

Peter, just as well as Grounch, knew the weak link in the lawyer's chain. Yet he did not count on it in the least. He was glad that it was present, for it annoyed and delayed Grindon Grounch. Yet, some day, the weakness, he felt very sure, would be removed. Then Peter Samuels must fight the cunning of Grindon Grounch, fight fire with fire. And, when Peter had won the victory (he did not doubt at all that he would win it) then he would punish his old-time opponent—punish him terribly, break him, absolutely ruin him. But Peter was relying exclusively on human law.

Now, just as, so many months before, old Christopher Muggins had entered Grindon Grounch's office in a kind of panic, so, now, he entered it again. This time, however, not for the sake of his dear dead Monty, or even of himself, but for that of his old-time and now well loved friend, Peter Samuels.

He had given his word to Peter Samuels. Had he not indeed declared to Peter that, if Peter ever needed his, Christopher's, services he should have them? He had certainly said that very thing. And now—strange, strange he had not thought of it be-

fore—he had conceived the idea of going to Grounch's office and there demanding a return of the five shares of Church Rock which he, Christopher Muggins, had been, a very long time ago, inveigled into selling to Grindon Grounch and Burley, but which, at present, as Chris happened to know, were all in Grounch's hands.

He entered Grounch's office with a very jaunty, would-be-conciliatory air, which sat ill upon his aged face and figure. "Well, well, Mr. Grounch! How's the prosecutin' now-a-days? How's the prosecutin'? Gettin' 'em? Are you gettin' 'em? Sic 'em."

Grounch looked up from a law book. "Good day, Mr. Muggins," he responded in a slow, dignified manner. "Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Secretary?"

"Don't know but there is. Don't know but there is. How's the prosecutin'? How's the prosecutin'?"

Mr. Grounch was greatly irritated. Even born lawyers and prosecutors are not of nearly so calm and self-possessed a temperament as the public believes. Further, as it happened, Mr. Grindon Grounch had just lost two prosecutions—big game. He felt tired, saw further defeats coming, predicted for himself (if things went on like this) no further savory reputation with the good people of Starlight.

"What the hell do you want?" he suddenly barked.

Christopher Muggins first looked at the man with amazement. Then he felt his own ire begin rapidly

to mount. "You needn't be so *darn* cross, if you *are* prosecutor for Starlight County. Who *made* you? *I* helped do it. You know, if it hadn't been for me, you wouldn't now have had control of Church Rock —you or Burley alone, or the two of you put together. It was *my shares* that made you rich. That's what it was, it was my shares."

Grounch did not answer. In fact he began to pore over his book again, tracing with a shaky forefinger a line or two which seemed to bother him particularly.

The Secretary, having received no reply, grew angrier still. "Say, Grounch, you can cut me all you blankety please, but you're going to listen to what I came for. Now look up from your blankety blank book, and listen."

"Well!" Grounch eyed him with a devilish glare.

"I've come for those five shares of stock that you came over one night to the State House and swindled me out of for you and Burley and against Peter Samuels."

Grounch was so dumbfounded that, for a moment, he could not talk.

Christopher proceeded. "You lied to me. You told me that Peter Samuels had double crossed me. And you showed me three several documents in Peter's handwriting, each and every one of which was genuine and yet might just as well have been a forgery because of the false construction which you, Grindon Grounch, put upon it for the purpose of swindling—yes, sir, that's the precise word—

swindling me out of my five shares of Church Rock that you and Burley might get control of the quarries that Peter Samuels wanted. Now I want 'em back. Will you give 'em back, those five shares? Will you give 'em back? Say, answer me."

Grindon Grounch was, to all outward appearance, again wholly absorbed in his precious volume. Never a word of answer vouchsafed he to the Secretary of State.

Then the latter jumped up, and, with blazing eyes and quivering, outstretched forefinger, demanded: "What do you find in your doubly accursed law book that's so entertaining that you can't reply to a decent question from a Christian gentleman?"

"Assuming that it's some of your business," replied Grounch, languidly, "I read: 'The son of the Secretary of State—Monty Muggins was his name—actually committed a robbery, and attempted to commit a murder. He took the jewels which he had stolen, he and an accomplice named Anderson, into Equatorial Africa. There, in a "royal cemetery," into which he and the said Anderson had been pursued by a certain Peter Samuels (who wanted the jewels on his own account) he sought to kill the said accomplice, and so to escape with the jewels in his possession alone. But, being a big fat dub, he was too slow and so got killed himself, his intended victim being the killer. But, ere he had wholly passed away, he managed to shoot his accomplice. And so, even in his death, he became, in addition to all his other iniquities, a murderer.' "

"It's a lie!" shouted the Secretary. "A damned, dirty, low down, infamous lie. And you know it. My Monty was an angel from heaven."

Grounch leaned over, opened a drawer, and removed therefrom a little sheaf of papers. "Here," said he, in a dull, dead tone, as if he were merely bored by the whole proceeding, "is the dictaphone record of a conversation which recently passed between you and Mr. Peter Samuels. According to this record, you believed easily enough, when it came from Mr. Samuels' lips, the identical story which, just now, you have received with incredulity from my own."

"Yes!" shouted the Secretary. "You! You damned— You—"

He could get no further. So, taking his hat, he rushed in a rage and with his heart full of wild and futile schemes and projects for revenge, over to the Samuels bank. There he was promptly invited into Peter's little room, and, as it happened, being in quite a proper condition to receive it, he was quickly made the receptacle of a certain plan which had long been had in mind by Peter Samuels.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Slabub of Starlight

Months went by.

Peter felt no more the cross-pull of the ministry. He was a banker now and nothing more—all business, financial power, success. He wasted (as he would now have called it) no more time in contemplation, was in fact much too busy to see one tenth the people who applied to interview him. Of God he saw and heard nothing. Even the big new church building was almost forgotten. Not quite forgotten, but the plans could never exactly be brought to suit him. Ever it seemed that the topmost part of the building, the church part, was, in the architects' plans, getting too large a proportion of the whole space. And what these willing workers wished to allow for the crowning glory of the edifice, he reduced again and yet again, and still, somehow, he never could get the space quite small enough to suit him, or the expense cut down to what appeared to him to be a reasonable, a logical figure. So the church, for the present, remained unbuilt. He would, of course, on some fine day, erect it, but not just now. It was always a matter that could easily be put off, be attended to at any time. First thing—the bank. He believed he would one day build a vast, exclusively bank building, such a structure for a bank as never before had mortal eyes beheld in

all this vast commercial and financial universe. Why, it would be— He called the architects again, and asked drawings for a bank. He described the bank. The architects slunk away in absolute fear and trembling. Well, they would do their best to satisfy Peter Samuels' vast desires.

Then, one day, something happened that made Peter cease to project even a new building for his bank. He had, namely, there on State House Square, met Attorney Grindon Grounch. And Grounch had simply laughed in his face. Peter had happened to be jingling double eagles in his pocket, just as usual, and Grindon called out cheerily, "The coin of the Chink!" That was all—just five words. But those were enough. Peter went to his private room in a foaming rage.

He had that very day had a terrible scene with Patricia, who, by the bye, was becoming a common scold. So his rage embraced the entire world. "Never mind," cried he, and, in the privacy of his office, swore a terrible oath against human kind. "Never mind. Never mind. Even with you yet, old man, Grindon! Even. Even with many another human being also. By God, how I hate! how I *hate!* how I HATE!"

He pushed a button and summoned Recent Green. Now Recent, as the reader will probably recall, was the very decadent nephew of old Uncle Henry, gardener to Peter Samuels. Peter had long ago seen promising material in this ne'er-do-weel—promising, that is, for certain purposes. So, not too

suddenly but by very slow degrees, he had begun to cultivate him. Later, he had granted him a place in the bank—that of assistant janitor, at twice the wages he had ever received before. All the bank wondered, but Peter knew his own plans. How strangely he overlooked the young negro's frequent absences, his almost uninterrupted addiction to gambling and drink! Well, on the present day, Peter pushed the little button which there was on the side of his desk, and, to the emissary who promptly responded, gave this command: "Show in Recent Green."

When Recent had entered and been inducted to a very luxurious chair, then quoth Peter, seating himself: "Recent, I've a big job for a big man. I wonder if you could do it for me."

Recent's eye glistened. "Ain't been nothin' too big fer me yet, Samuels." He had had one sweet taste of Peter's easy money, and now saw visions of fortunes all about the room.

Peter went to his desk, opened it, came back with a stack of bills—twenties and fifties, so on—thousands of dollars altogether. "Recent," said he, flipping and flopping the bills, "I've seen a great deal of you of late, and I've been greatly impressed by your many good qualities—especially your ability to keep your mouth shut."

"Not a damn bad quality for a professional gambler," said Recent, without the slightest hesitation.

"Nor is it a bad one for anybody," amplified the banker. "In fact, in the present affair—in which

I have decided that you would make a most excellent actor-in-chief—it is the one important quality—in fact the one very quality without which—er—these bills could not be transferred."

Recent's pupils glowed like the deeps of Hades. His bosom expanded. He lay back lazily in the good soft leather, and alternately stretched to his full length and again relaxed. He cleared his throat pompously, "Ur-ugh!" Peter began to smile, thinking what an absurdly comic figure the little black fellow would make for some musical extravaganza show.

Quoth Recent, "They ain't no damned clam on all the beach whut knows the mouth-shuttin' business an' the keep-shuttin' business any better'n I do. I'm the clam that taught the other clams their trade. See?"

Peter saw. Then, again flipping the crisp new bills, he began to bare his project to the widening eyes of the negro. "Recent," he declared, "there's no other man of all my acquaintance that I'm so ready to trust in this matter as you. Now listen, and make no mistakes. In Southern Illinois, at a place called Nonest, there's a tremendous big coal-mine. I'll show you how it's operated." Pencil in hand and paper before him. "You, I understand, have worked in a number of coal-mines."

"A very short time in each of them, Peter." This with great condescension. To show his equality with the great banker, the negro spat on the floor. To show his easy acceptance of the equality proposition, Pete spat also, and then went on.

"Now you see how easy it would be, if I got you a position as shot-firer in this coal-mine, to produce some day a terrible catastrophe—supposing that such a thing was absolutely needful in the way of business."

"Ah—puffic'ly simple, Samuels—Peter!"

"Well—" Peter was looking Recent straight in the eye, with what was intended to be a magnetic and compelling gaze. Recent was slightly affected too. "Well, here's the idea. I get you the position of shot-firer, because I own considerable stock in the mine, also because you happen to be a relative of Uncle Henry Green, my gardener, who is a very good friend of mine."

"All right."

"After a fairly long time of conscientious service, you, one day, are a little careless—intentionally, of course, but apparently unintentionally—and blow the whole mine up."

Recent looked startled.

"Are you afraid?" asked Peter. He flipped again the stack of bright, new bills—all twenties and fifties or higher, all twenties and fifties or higher, running into the thousands of dollars, too, in the aggregate.

"I ain't afraid of nuthin'. Ever see a gambler 'at *wuz?*"

"Good," said Peter, laying the bills loosely on the desk, and then putting the tips of his fingers softly together. In this way he built what might have been regarded as a kind of fleshly steeple for some church.

"Good. Nobody can ever punish you, Recent. Nobody, in fact, can ever find you out. Nothing to discover. It was not intentional. It was merely an accident. You simply forgot."

Recent was looking off and into vacancy. He said not a syllable. Peter was sure he had him.

Flipping the bills again, and "cutting" the stack at a place where a glorious hundred-dollar note plainly shone out, he continued, slowly. "The explosion should occur when the mine is full of people, all, all at work."

Recent kept on staring into vacancy.

"You see, Mr. Green, I want that mine to fail—to fail financially. It is all part of a great commercial manipulation, the details of which you would probably not care to bother with. All you need to do is to be careless, and then come to me. The mining corporation (a very wealthy company) must, for certain legal reasons, and in consequence of the explosion, pay enormous damages. I'll see that the people with whom they have their workmen insured are absolutely insolvent, or else—"

Recent leaped to his feet with an unexpected look. To Peter he seemed more enormously proud, more comically king-like and bombastic even than ever before, and that was saying a good deal.

Recent came up slowly to the place where Peter was sitting. He closed his right hand into a fist, and as he talked, beat on Peter's table a continually increasing noise of emphasis. "I *tells* you, Mr. Samuels. I *tells* you, sir, very plainly. Yes, I *tells* you. An' I

tells you *dis.* I tells you I ain't nuthin' but a dirty low down nigger, an' a gamblin' nigger at dat. But I do got *some* respect for myself. An' so I tells you plainly—you de bigges' banker in de city o' Starlight—I tells you, sir, dat I *scohns* you money, an' I scohns you plan to muhder hund'eds of people, an', mos' of all, suh, I scohns YOU." At the YOU he hit the table the most indignant bang of all, and, lifting an active foot, kicked the pile of money not only off the table, but into the farthest corner of the room.

"Good *boy!*" cried Peter, in apparent ecstasy, rushing up and patting Recent on the shoulder. "*Good* boy! *Good* boy! I was just trying you out, trying you out, Recent. Thank God. Thank God there is some one I can really trust."

Recent's mood slowly changed. He grinned. He was beginning to see what he thought was light. He did not know that the great Peter's light had now come to be darkness, and his darkness other men's light.

Peter went on. "What I really want you for is assistant night watchman at the bank. I was trying you out to see whether you were responsible, or whether you could be bought."

"Really?"

"Really. Here's a retainer." He handed Recent a fifty-dollar bill. Your salary will be three hundred a month. But you have to quit gambling."

"I quits right now. I accepts." He almost dropped to his knees. "Honest to goodness, Mr.

Samuels. I sho did think you'se in earnest. I might, though, 'a' knowed—for *you,* sir, is de very best man in Starlight."

Peter phoned his new administrative act to Toplofty, then to the day watchman, asking that he, in turn, pass on the news to the watchman for the night. Then he dismissed Recent.

When the negro was gone, Peter, communing, said: "A blessed good thing I didn't tell him it was really Church Rock I wanted blown up. Try 'em out first. Try 'em out first. Then nobody can ever squeal on you."

He stepped to the door and opened it to see if any one was listening. As it happened, there was Jack Argyronetos at a writing desk. This was the man who, on the Fourth of July, some years ago, had shouted from the gallery, in response to Peter's entrance into church: "Zeeto ee Ellas! Zeeto ee Amerikee!"

Peter called Jack to his room, and had a long conference with him. Jack was a known bad man, patriotic enough, fond of both America and Greece, but avaricious and without scruple. Yes, he had worked in coal mines, quarries too. Yes, he wanted to make money. Why, for a stack like that, he would —do—yes, do anything. Yes, yes—blow it up. Blow up coal mine, blow up quarry—whichever you say.

The night for the explosion was carefully decided on. Peter gave Jack half the money in advance. The rest should be paid later.

CHAPTER XXX

Give no Advice, O Friendly Physician

Peter grew more imperious day by day, more imperious, more avaricious, more proud and hard. He "fired" Recent Green, of course, at the first opportunity. Recent was all contrition. He knew that Peter was not in the least to blame, went in fact and cried over Peter's very hands (he, the hardened gambler, Recent Green) called Peter "the sweetest and best" man in Starlight. "You tried to make a man of me, Mr. Samuels, but 'tain't no use. An' to think o' how extremely hahd you tried to test me out and 'zamine me properly in the fust place—after all *that*. An' now I disappoints you so. Fire me. You'se quite right."

The discharge of Recent was proper enough, but Peter discharged many other men than Recent, some without the least excuse other than that they wanted living salaries. He even gave their "walking papers" to a pair of sister stenographers who were trying to bring up properly the six orphan children of a brother who had died. One day, as he went down home, he stepped out into the garden, and there, amid the flaming roses of a soft June day, and the voices of the winds in the currant bushes, told dear old Uncle Henry that his salary was cut—not *so* much, but only *thus and so* hereafter.

Uncle Henry was so astonished at this unheard of turn in affairs that he actually said: "Boss, how come you do a little stunt like dat?"

"If you don't like the wages I give you, get out."

Uncle Henry dropped his spade. Then he held both big bony hands straight out before him in querulous expostulation. "Get out?"

"Get out."

"No suh, Mistuh Samyules, you cyarnt *put* me out, suh. Old Mistuh Daddy-in-law, little Miss Patty's daddy hyeh, he say, fo' 'e died, 'Henry,' sez ee, 'Uncle Henry,' he sez, 'when *I* gone, *you* gwine stay right hyer an' look aftuh dis place an' Patty.' Yes, suh, dat whut he sez, suh. An' dat de ve'y way he say it. Ner *you* cyarnt change it nudder. Ax some lawyuh, Mistuh Petuh. Ax some lawyuh. Who gwine *love* dem roses, an' bug 'em, an' 'tect 'em 'gainst de wind an' de frost, ef *I* ain't hyer. No suh, Mistuh Petuh. You can cut dem wages, an' cut 'em much ez you like. But hyer I stays. Ax some lawyuh."

"Very well, stay. But no complaining." He saw Patty on the back porch, started toward her.

As he neared her he said, "Go into the house."

She turned a flaming crimson, but obeyed.

Once inside, Peter said: "Patricia, how's your own fortune? Is it prospering? Tell me about it."

Patricia flew into a fearful rage, talked wildly for a time, eventually accused her husband of not minding his own business and of trying to pick her confidence.

"I'm not trying to pick your confidence," Peter protested. "I've never had it, and, in general, I don't want it. But, just now, I believe it is a good time for both of us to be very frank with each other, and to tell each other exactly how matters stand—I mean in a financial way."

"What's unusual just now?"

"I have sold my interest in the Peter Samuels Bank."

"You!" She gave a fearful start and threw up her hands.

"I. The selling was simply wonderful and I sold. Four sixty-eight. And I, of course, have resigned as president and all that. I intend to retire—then to live."

She stood looking at him like a statue of wonder itself.

"Everything, in fact," he went on, "has done extremely well of late—all, at least, except the Starlight and Southeastern."

She gave another kind of start, and looked steadily down.

"Something puzzles me about that. A mysterious power lies in the situation somewhere, a strangely operating, almost baffling, force. I cannot make it out. But I don't have to worry especially about the Starlight and Southeastern, any more than about Church Rock. I am rich—rich beyond the dreams of avarice, almost beyond the dreams of ambition. Why, in the last six months, I've made a million a week."

"And told me nothing about it!"

"Why should I tell you? *You* give no confidences to *me*. I used to tell you everything. Nor do I bother you even now with any details. You would neither care for them nor (probably) be able to understand them. Let this one statement be sufficient. In spite of certain losses (and all men do have losses) I have nevertheless won, won immensely, unparalleledly, almost superhumanly. Nobody else in all Starlight (I might nearly say the world) can begin to compare with me. Croesus was a veritable joke. There only remain a very few wrinkles to iron out of my situation. And all this wealth is mine. I am still in the prime of life. Out of the harness, I shall begin to live." Peter looked afar, as if he saw great visions of luxury, pomp, splendor, now gratified if long-restrained lusts. He might, in his mind's eye, so far as Patricia knew, have been gazing at Paris—or any of the other sinful capitals of the degenerate old world.

Neither he nor Patricia said one word about the building of a church.

Peter had not even taken his hat off. He now walked through the front doorway, without so much as "Good-bye."

As he passed up street there was just one thought filling the entire field of his attention. Tomorrow was his last day at the bank, his last day of business. Never more a galley slave, after that one supreme day. Why, tomorrow, about five, perhaps a little

later, he would just begin to LIVE. Suddenly he heard the imperious voice of Straight.

He looked up. The doctor, hand to mouth, was fairly shouting at him, from across Dollar Avenue. No wonder! Straight had plainly just come out of Burley's home, and stentorianism is contagious. What was it that the middle-aged simpleton was shouting? O yes. "Every man has his breaking point, Peter." That was it. "Every man has his breaking point."

"That so?" replied Peter. "Then why is it that the sons of Esculapius never take so much as even an hour's vacation—or their own advice?"

"Too busy looking after other fools." The doctor was in his auto now. Away he sped.

Peter was fearfully angry at this unrequested advice flung at him across the public highway. "Give Straight a piece of my mind, the howling hyena, tomorrow," he angrily threatened. And on he went to the bank, where, so busy he was with the final arrangement of so many and such varied matters, that he at length, shortly after midnight, drew the big lounge out into the middle of his little room, and spent the remaining hours of darkness in a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

Ho Now, the Pride!

Pat, when Peter had left her, stood for a long time in the middle of the floor, motionless, wondering. She felt no exaltation at his approaching retirement from business, at the accumulated victory upon victory which had made the retirement possible, nay even desirable. The higher you build, the more easily you topple down. She only wondered if this were really Peter, this strange, hard, menacing man.

She could not really recall just when the change had first appeared in Peter. It might have been about the time when first he had spoken to her about building the great church. But that, of course, that wonderful project, whose object had been to honor God, could not in any wise have been responsible for the change.

After a time she thought that it could not possibly have been that project. It must, yes it must, have been the decision on Peter's part to borrow on the jewels so that the money might be obtained wherewith to build the church. Yes, that was it. All had been right enough until then. In her heart began to arise a grim realization that she herself had first proposed to Peter that he make an improper disposal of the gems, but she would not allow herself to face the disagreeable fact.

She began to wonder whether the pawning of property which you held in trust for another person did or did not constitute "embezzlement." And was that a felony? There was terror for her in the very word. Had Peter redeemed the jewels yet? She was quite sure that he must have done so, now that success was his. Why, Peter could almost buy a houseful of jewels! But had he actually redeemed the Chinese rubies? Suppose that they had been stolen from, or lost by, the London house with which Peter had left them as a pledge. What then? Would they hold him responsible criminally, just because he did not return the very same stones that had been placed in his hands, even if he paid the owners double or treble their highest market value? And even suppose that he got the jewels back, had them ready to deliver to the rightful claimant at whatsoever moment that person might chance to appear—could he, even then, be held responsible criminally, just because, once on a time, he had converted them wrongfully to his own use?

She seemed to remember such a case. Yes, she was very sure now that she did remember it. She had seen it in some of the newspapers. And the man had been sent to the penitentiary. What if the man whose name she bore, even Peter Samuels, should chance to be sent there? She shuddered as if with ague. Then she puckered up her lips and began to cry.

"There, there now, little Patty!" It was Uncle

Henry, who had just come into the house for further instructions about the roses. "There, there now, little Miss Pat. Your old daddy, he say to me, long time ago: 'No matter *what* happen, Henry, you gwine promise me foh to stay hyeah always, hyeah on de ol' place, an' tek keer o' dem dere little roses, and dat dere little Pat.' Ah! I done promise."

He softly touched her shoulder with the tip of a big awkward forefinger. "Little Miss Pat, ain't I done stay?"

As soon as Patricia could speak, she turned and uttered kindly words to Uncle Henry. Then, her mood changing again: "That husband of mine, the brute! He cut your salary this morning. He's just a brute, nothing but a brute. Never mind, Uncle Henry. I'll make it all up to you."

"Who dat dere done gone an' cut my salary, Miss Pat? *I* ain't sayin' nobody done cut my wages. I'm gettin' jest exactly de same as always, jest exactly de same as 'fo' good old daddy said that I wuz to set an' stay hyer an' love dem red roses an' white ones, an' look after he little Pat."

"Don't lie to me, Henry. I heard him cut your wages, and say that, if you didn't like it, you could go."

"Who? Me? Mistuh Petuh cut ol' Uncle Henry's wages! No suh! Tain't so! Mistuh Petuh Samyules nevuh done nuffin' like dat. Hyer I is, an' hyer I'se gwine fer to remain. But Missy Pat, whut I gwine do 'bout buggin' dem bigger roses—de roses dat Mistuh Petuh set 'nunder you winduh dar, dem

many long years ago, wif his own hands? Dem dar roses, dey sho 'bout ter die. An' de big ol' magnolia tree, too, it jest erbout fer to go cattywampussed. Need 'structions, Miss Patty. Need 'structions."

Now Patty, in her heart, had determined to leave Peter Samuels. He might, if he chose, bring an action for divorce, or whatsoever he was a mind to. He might also keep his money. She had enough of her own, thank Heaven. And she never could stand that brute, that tyrant, any more. Why, one day, he had pushed her, actually pushed her, saying: "Get out of my way. You've never done anything but stand in my way. Get out of it."

Well, she would get out of his way with a vengeance. And she would stay out. Had he not, in fact, himself deserted *her* for weeks—that, too, just after his return from Africa? And did not the whole town (as Elizabeth Burley had felt it her plain duty to inform her) go to talking about the matter, and then keep on talking about it for dreary months and months? And what wrong had she ever done to him, Peter? Just none at all. And think of the many harsh words, the brutalities without number, the neglect—the sheer, calm, cold neglect—for months and months on end, neglect that was worse by far than any harsh words or any sort or kind of violence. Think of all *that*. "Yes, Uncle Henry," she said, "I will go with you, and I will show you." But to herself she declared, "This is the last day in

this accursed house. Tomorrow! Tomorrow I will go."

After she had gone with Uncle Henry and come into the house again, she went to her room and packed, dry eyed, two trunks and a suitcase. When she had finished, she went and looked at herself in a glass. Her face, save for the poppies in her cheeks, was a sickly white. There were light streaks running through her golden hair. "No wonder!" she cried. "*That* man has done it, that dog. I can be all ready by tomorrow night. Then I will leave him. He will have a great brag in all the city papers about the wonderful life he has led and the great things he has accomplished. Then, in the morning, they will know about *me*. I will see that all the city knows that I have left him, that I have left him forever, and exactly why I left." She sat down calmly, and began writing foolish letters to her friends. In each and every one of them there was a full confession of the kind of life which she had been leading, now for years, with her husband, Peter Samuels—a bitterly frank, and utterly unrestrained and absolutely reckless and even exaggerated statement. Nothing was to be shaded, or toned down. The beast! He had deserved it! The beast!

CHAPTER XXXII

Let the Stronger Man Win: It Is Inevitable

Peter awoke at four o'clock. For a moment he rubbed his temples gently as though some slight pain beat in them, or as a man might to soothe a growing perplexity. As, however, the promise of the day dawned full in his mind, he sprang off the lounge, rearranged his clothing, and, having ordered a little breakfast from a near-by all-night restaurant, hastily gulped it down, and was once more at work.

He was really surprised, so hard he had labored in the last few years, especially the last few weeks, that he should feel so extremely little fatigue. There was not a pain about him now, now that he had got his eyes well opened, not a pain, not a pain. Neither was there even the slightest sign of fatigue. Remarkable, remarkable how little of fatigue he had felt in the last—well, a very long number of years. The older he got, the stronger. So it seemed.

He worked faster and faster.

When noon came he did not even take luncheon, but toiled on. He was almost through, and this must be his last day in the bank. He had so willed it: so it should be. At length, about half past one, the last of the papers was finished. Peter Samuels was a free man. Not one more banking document was to be read by him, not one more note or letter signed. He pushed back the completed mass of promiscuous

documents with a feeling of great glee, immeasurable triumph. Never again would he speak to that instrument yonder, the dictagraph—never, at least, for banking, for routine, purposes—not, that is, in the way of work, of toil.

About this time the phone rang, and he picked the receiver up. "Peter Samuels."

"This is Grindon Grounch."

"Ah yes, Mr. Grounch."

"Mr. Samuels, I have a very important subject to talk over with you. I wonder if you could come to my office for a few moments."

Could he? He certainly could. For years he had been looking forward to this identical, this monumental, second—this apex and pinnacle of all time. He had beheld it even in his dreams. Sometimes, of older days, he had seen it with great fear, but, lately, only with insuperable confidence. No, he dreaded it no more, would not in fact have missed it for the Koh-i-noor diamond. Yet he must feign reluctance. Mr. Grounch must be fooled, led to suppose that Peter was almost terrified.

"Why, I'm not so sure, Mr. Grounch. Pretty busy, just now. How important is this matter on which you wish to consult me?"

"So exceedingly important that never before in all your life has anything else come up which was half so momentous. It concerns your immediate welfare, your dearest wishes, your wealth, your health, your honor, your reputation as a Christian, a gentleman, an honest man."

"Dear me!" cried Peter, affecting an affectation of indifference to the coming charge. "So important as all that? Well, well, Mr. Grounch, I suspect I'd better go over. Yes, I'll be right over. Don't go. I'll be there in just a very few minutes." He spoke as a scared man might who was trying to appear brave.

When he had "hung up," he thought he would delay just a little. That would make Grounch think that he was really afraid. He first put his hat on leisurely. Then—it was early spring—he went and took from a closet his light overcoat, and slowly got into that. Then he went to his window and looked for some time out into the street. How often he had gazed upon these roaring multitudes in his banking years gone by! Time had been when he almost actually loved these people, these stinking, disgusting multitudes. Ur-ugh! What dirty, detestable throngs! Mostly alien they were, and mostly ignorant. Even those of them who were native-born were nearly all ignorant. Ignorant of right, ignorant of wrong, forgetful even of the little learning they had been forced to acquire in the schools! Possessed of the privilege to vote, they and their foreign-born brothers voted together like similar herds of wild jackasses. Ignorant! Dirty and ignorant! Ignorant especially of the laws of their own nation, of their own state, their own city. How glad he was *he* was not so ignorant—especially not so ignorant of the law. It was a great friend, the law—a friend like fire though, you had to be careful.

He kissed his hands to the roaring multitude. "Good-bye," he murmured. "Good-bye, detestable riffraff: criminals, snowbirds, dead beats, bums. Good-bye, big business, also! Good-bye, directors' meetings, secret meetings, star-chamber plannings and plottings." The man had buffeted his way up—buffeted or smiled, chiefly buffeted—through innumerable ugly crises of chicane, treachery and fraud. He saw now the whole career in a kind of panorama. Ugh! There should be no more of these ugly and fearful things forever after until the end. He would see how beautiful a matter life could be made into, once outside the whirl and chaos of business and commercial strife—how beautiful an object for himself. All should be invested to the greatest advantage.

Now for the final skirmish, the last battle. A feeling of joy and strength came upon him. He almost rushed outside his room and into the lobby of the bank. There he astounded old Mr. Toplofty by clapping him so hard on the shoulder that the cashier nearly fell down. "Not to be—expected!" coughed Toplofty. "Not to be expected, Mr. Samuels. Glad you're feeling like your old self, sir, though."

When Peter got outside the bank, he found the day much warmer than he had been supposing. He stopped and removed his overcoat, threw it across his arm. Here was full spring-tide again, actually spring. But, in all the new-old processes of returning life, he saw no more the hand of the Creator.

Spring was just—spring. There would be good crops this year, he thought, good "picking" for financiers. What a shame to be out of all that! Anyway, how many blessed things there were to eat in the spring! Yonder, as if by way of illustration, came old Uncle Eph Morrison now chewing an onion. Ephraim stopped and spoke to Peter Samuels.

"Got dat feller in de penitentiary, Mistuh Samuels."

"What fellow?"

"Henry Smithers."

"O! the man that forged the thirty dollar check on our bank."

"Yessuh. Jest done heard his trial dis mahnin'. Mr. Toplofty [here he grinned] done give jest de kind o' testimony dat might have been expected."

"And they've sent Smithers up?"

"Yassuh. Only defense he had wuz, needed de money fer his two babies an' he wuz sickly. Yassuh. Good-bye, Mr. Samuels, suh."

Peter cursed Smithers, thought of the defaulting teller he had so sentimentally pardoned many years ago, and went on across the Capitol Square to the County Court House. There he bounded up to the prosecutor's office, disdaining, in the joy of his anticipated success, all such trivial assistances as elevators.

He had known quite well, just as soon as he had heard Grounch's voice over the phone, that now the last link had been set in Grindon's chain of evidence.

Grounch was much too careful a man to risk his great reputation as a lawyer in a case against so prominent a personage as Peter Samuels, unless the entire evidence was absolutely complete. So the young Chinaman must have arrived. He had probably arrived some days before, but of course Grounch had waited to spring the mine until this perfect moment. Grounch was a cruel, a relentless, prosecutor or persecutor. He, like Peter, had struggled upward from the depths. But, unlike a certain financier, as Peter thought, he had been embittered and spiritually degraded by the process. Grounch, in his heart of hearts, Peter knew, was a hater of successful men. So he loved, there in the quiet of his inner office, to humiliate the very successful, to tantalize them, to torture them, often for long hours, before he finally haled them up in public before the court, the world.

Often, too, at these private sessions, or assizes, Grounch had succeeded in terrifying his victims into making important criminations against others or damning admissions against themselves. In most of the cases, he had pretended to possess much more knowledge of the crime in question than he really had had.

Peter knew all these things about Grindon—knew them like the interest table, knew them from the bank's own experience with the prosecutor's office. He also knew that, as to himself, it was out of the question to buy this prosecutor off. Lesser men might purchase Grounch, but, in the case of promi-

nent transgressors, there was reputation to be made and made abundantly. And, as Peter well knew, reputation, in the mind of Attorney Grindon Grounch was worth far more than banks full of money.

Peter was going to a little private inquisition in the prosecutor's office. At the end of that inquisition—

O very well. He was glad of a chance to thresh this Grindon here in private so thoroughly that never, in public, would he dare to make an accusation against Peter Samuels—for fear of losing, not gaining, in reputation. If fame were easily to be achieved by a successful prosecution against some prominent man, it was also easily lost by a prosecution that failed.

He entered Grounch's waiting room. Nobody there.

He went to Grounch's private office. The door was slightly ajar. Peter pushed the door open, went in, and softly closed the door behind him. He looked all round for the Chinaman. No Chinaman.

Grounch was apparently deep in the mysteries of a law book. "Tuning up the old gray matter?" asked Pete, like a scared man trying to be flippant.

Grounch softly closed the book on his left forefinger. "Ah! Mr. Samuels! I was fearing you might not come."

"And I," said Mr. Samuels, affecting to be tremulous, "was much delighted to come—though

I am very tired and quite unlike myself, I must admit."

"Ah-h!" The prosecutor gloated.

Peter, at a motion from Grounch, sat down in the only chair that offered, and then noticed, strangely enough, that he was now gazing directly through a low but widish window of the prosecutor's room across a twilit area, and so on to several barred and stone-framed windows of the county jail. Most admirable arrangement, no doubt, thought Peter, for the terrification of the weak. As if timidly, he spoke to the prosecutor about the excellent psychology of this arrangement.

Grounch looked on him with a superior smile. "You, I hear, Mr. Samuels," he began, "are just on the point of retiring from an active business life."

"It is true, Mr. Grounch." Mr. Samuels took out his handkerchief and blew his nose nervously.

"It must be gratifying," went on the prosecutor, "after a life of so much, let us say almost unparalleled, success, and, too, at your early age, to be able to retire, to throw off the cares and burdens of business, and, with a boundless fortune, got in honorable ways—"

"It is true," interrupted Peter. "My money has all been made honestly."

"With, as one might put it, all the world at your feet, full of respect for you, full of admiration for you, full almost of divine worship for you, even as if you were a god—"

Peter made an inclusive gesture, as if sweeping all of something or other away. He did not, as a matter of course, care at all about the things Grounch was mentioning.

Grounch looked out of the big window standing opposite himself, and first at the long row of windows there in the office of the Secretary of State. Then, farther, across State House Square, to the Peter Samuels bank. Then, farther still, down Dollar Avenue, and away across the river in the direction of the Peter Samuels church.

"Even the church respects you, Mr. Samuels—the church, for which you have done so very much."

"I have done something for the church," admitted Peter Samuels, modestly.

"Have you ever contemplated, Mr. Samuels, erecting a finer building on the ground now occupied by the Peter Samuels church?"

Peter stood up hastily. "I am sorry," he said, "but this is my very last day in the bank. Lack of time forbids that I should spend many minutes in trivial conversation."

"One would naturally suppose," responded Mr. Grounch, slowly and methodically, "that the building of a great church edifice was a sober and serious business—one involving due consideration and the very heaviest responsibilities."

Peter, in spite of his former actual assurance and mere pretense of fear, now felt himself turning pale. And in spite of his utmost will to remain standing, he sat again down. The great hour had actually

come, the moment of the final struggle in his existence. Very well. Why should he worry? He was thoroughly prepared for this contest. That had ever been one of the fundamental principles of his remarkably successful existence—always to be thoroughly and unconquerably prepared. There must be no hole in one's financial or legal armor.

Grounch quietly and now without the slightest attempt at theatrical effect, went slowly on. "Some things are very painful," said he. "Some things that we have to do in our office of prosecuting attorney are *extremely* painful. And one of the hardest and most painful of all, is to expose to public view the foulness and corruption which lie at the hearts of some of our most respected and celebrated men."

Peter did not answer.

"And some of our richest."

Peter slowly arose again, and, taking his hat from the nearby table, declared, as if timidly indignant: "I deeply regret the fact, Mr. Prosecutor, but I have no time to listen to you further. You are filled with the platitudinous nonsense of the day. I would suggest that, if you feel it necessary to deliver yourself of the kind of things you now are speaking, you do so before the Current Events Club, or some similar organization."

"One moment!" The prosecutor's voice rang out clear and strong as iron. "Peter Samuels, you are guilty of grand larceny."

Peter handed Grounch a copy of the "Revised

Statutes of Starlight," which chanced to be lying on Grounch's desk. "Read me the law." He did not say, "What are the facts," but "Read me the law."

Grounch turned the leaves of the volume, and, after a little, where a corner of a leaf had been carefully turned down, he paused, and read—very slowly, but in a clear, determined tone: "Whoever embezzles or fraudulently converts to his own use, or secretes with intent to embezzle or fraudulently convert to his own use, money, goods or property delivered to him, which may be the subject of larceny, or any part thereof, shall be deemed guilty of larceny."

This was not exactly the angle from which Peter had expected the attack. So he stood for a time in contemplation.

"You, as a man who knows the law himself, must, of course, be able to interpret at least such clear and unmistakable language. You, I say, as a man who knows the law himself—as a kind of half-breed lawyer."

Peter looked up with the air of a scared rabbit. "I am not a lawyer of any kind."

"Whatever you are," said the attorney, becoming, in spite of himself, a bit theatrical, "whatever else you are, Peter Samuels, you are certainly a THIEF." At the final word he banged the volume on the desk.

Peter paid no attention to the racket. A fountain pen, however, had been bounced from the desk, and,

striking the hard terrazzo of the floor, had broken into pieces. Peter stooped, and, with great assumed concern and infinite patience, as if this matter were the most important of the day, picked the fragments up and laid them on the prosecutor's desk. "It is strange, Mr. Attorney," he said, now with a greater appearance of boldness than he had yet used, "how emphatically you destroy your own things. You were speaking of grand larceny."

"I was speaking of grand larceny."

"And, if I understand you, your point is that, in the State of Starlight, embezzlement (supposing the object or objects embezzled to have been possessed of sufficient value) is the same thing, precisely, as grand larceny."

"You have my meaning, Mr. Samuels. And the offense is punishable in the penitentiary, punishable with a very long term."

Peter decided to play his weakest card first. "When and where did *I* commit an embezzlement?" He spoke with moderate indignation.

"You do not remember that, in London, on the 20th of September, more than two years since, you borrowed an immense sum of money on a string of invaluable rubies? These you had just recovered in Africa from two men who had stolen them from you. They were not your property. They had, in fact, in the first instance, been left in your hands as a trust. But in London, you borrowed on them, treating them, so, as if they had been your own property."

Peter played the card. "Then the trial should be had in London. If London were the place where the conversion occurred, then London is the venue. It is, I believe, a principle underlying the whole of criminal law that any offense must be tried, not only in the country, but in the very county, wherein that offense was committed. Either the State or the accused, it is true, can now and then, under proper circumstances, secure a change of venue, but, even then, only to some other county, not to another nation."

Then said Grounch, referring to a sheaf of papers which he took from a drawer: "Let us see. On such and such a day, the following conversation occurred between you and Mrs. Samuels, your wife. You were in your private office at the bank, Mrs. Samuels in her home." In fullest detail he read the conversation which had actually occurred between Peter and Pat on that memorable Fourth of July, when Peter, in his office, exhausted by the labors of the day, also angry and hopeless because of the death of old Aunt Eliza Morrison, and the gibes and mockeries of William Burley about her supposed dower in Church Rock, had fluently, almost unrestrainedly, poured himself out to Patricia over the telephone, telling even of all his hopes and all his fears, describing, moreover and most unfortunately, how he, Peter Samuels, had already removed from its drawer in the safety deposit chamber of the bank, the Chinese jewels with full intent to convert them to his own use.

Ever since Tony—good old Tony—had revealed to Peter the fact that Peter's telephone line had long since been tapped, Peter had wondered and wondered whether, on that particular afternoon—which was, of course, a holiday, in banks as well as elsewhere—the minions of Grindon Grounch had been on duty at the "listening-in" instrument. Now his doubt was resolved. They had been on duty, and they had heard. Here was proof undeniable that he, Peter Samuels, had converted the Chinese jewels feloniously even before Muggins and his accomplice had stolen them from the stealer. What did the statute say? "Or secrete with *intent* to embezzle." There could be no question at all now. The venue of the action was very clearly and unmistakably Starlight, not London. Grounch was quite right. Still, what had Peter lost by playing this card? Nothing whatever. He had not, by playing it, actually changed the venue from London to Starlight. It had been in Starlight to begin with. And the playing of his little card had really strengthened his position a trifle, for it had enabled him to know positively that Grindon knew where the venue was. Peter would try a stronger card, his strongest.

"You, Mr. Prosecutor," he said, still with an appearance of some timidity, but yet, in spite of himself, a little sarcastically also, "you, Mr. Prosecutor, must be in any case joking; I wholly deny what you allege to be the facts. Still, as just a 'half-breed' lawyer, I will try to argue with you the hypothetical case which you have just supposed

for our mutual amusement. Assuming then, and only for the sake of casual argument, that the facts are quite as you state them, even then, no prosecution whatsoever against me can possibly be maintained."

"Think not?" asked Grounch, smiling. Peter looked him straight in the eye. The prosecutor's pupils were glowing with deep inner lights, like those of a rapacious beast when its victim lies immediately before it. Peter, in spite of himself, actually and not pretendedly, shuddered. "Mr. Samuels, there is a constable waiting for you now, at my outer door. He holds in his hands a serious legal process. Meantime, I am willing to hear your defense."

"Outlawed," said Peter.

"Outlawed? Do you mean to say that you think the statute of limitations has run against your crime?"

"I have committed no crime," countered Peter, glancing toward the closet door. "I have already stated that I was merely assuming that what you allege to be the facts against me are true. They are not true, but, supposing that they were, even then there could be no prosecution, because, to express the matter in the technical language of which you of course (not I) are a perfect master, 'the statute of limitations has run against the alleged facts.'" He gently laid his left hand down on the "Revised Statutes of the State of Starlight," and then vigorously pushed the volume out of Grindon's reach.

"No use to refer to that," he declared. "There has been a session of the legislature since that work

was published. Likewise, there isn't any use to refer to the latest 'Session Laws' of the State of Starlight, for, since the close of the latest session of the legislature, no 'session laws' has issued. Further, the printing of those laws in the official paper is weeks and weeks behind. Nevertheless, near the close of the last session, a certain important change was made in our Statute of Limitations."

"True," said Grounch. "I myself inspired it. I feared that I could not quite get my evidence against you all together in time to punish you, sir, under the statute. Hence the seeming necessity of altering the law. The statute said, 'three years.' I introduced a bill whereby the time within which the prosecution might be brought, in cases of embezzlement and grand larceny, was increased to five years. There can be no mistake. I drew that bill myself. I engineered it through the house and then the senate. It carried by a large majority, and it was signed by the governor. I saw him sign it. Not quite three years have expired since you committed your crime, and there remain a little over two years more."

Peter looked at his watch with a show of impatience which was not at all timid. "I have little more time to give you now, Grounch. But, in case you are really serious about this matter, you might examine *that.*" He drew from his pocket a small document, and, observing, "You will plainly perceive that it is signed by the Secretary of State himself and impressed with his seal," he placed the docu-

ment boldly in Grounch's outstretched and clawlike hand.

Grounch read for a very few minutes, then gave vent to a howl of Satanic irritation.

"Hell!" he cried. "What damned nonsense is this, that you, an amateur lawyer, and old senile Muggins have been concocting together? That damned piece of—"

"That damned piece of nonsense," responded Peter, as calmly as he could for the hot Latin blood that was now all boiling within him at the lawyer's contempt, "that damned piece of nonsense is nothing more or less than a certified copy of the latest statute of limitations of the State of Starlight—that is, as the statute now lies engrossed in the office of the Secretary of State. You will observe that it gives as the time within which an action for embezzlement or grand larceny can be brought is neither five years nor yet three, but only two. That bars completely all the facts you have just alleged against me—even supposing them to be true. Do you still regard that document as 'a piece of damned nonsense'?"

"Damned nonsense? Yes." He threw the certified copy to the floor, spat on it, spurned it with his foot.

"Why, you fool!" he shouted, "that isn't worth the paper it is printed and written on. I tell you, I plainly saw the bill as it went to the governor's office. I was also there when he signed it. It said 'five years.' You've been tampering with old Chris

Muggins, but it'll do you no good. I can prove what I say. I tell you I can prove it, absolutely prove it. The governor will swear to the five year period, so will the officers of house and senate, so, for that matter, will each and every member of the senate and the house."

"Sorry to differ," said Peter, cool again. "Being only an amateur lawyer, I am sorry to differ, but none of the gentlemen you mention will ever do anything of the sort. Have I your pardon if I lay my profane and unprofessional touch on some of your sacred volumes—ah, say this one?"

He took the volume down, and, turning daintily till he came to the proper place, said in a sweet, low tone: "Read this—if I—may be so bold—as to ask it. Ah—Supreme Court Reporter, Vol. XII, No. 22, at page 495. The case is entitled, 'Field *et al v.* Clark, Collector.' "

The attorney took the book and read—aloud and without any reticence, or any omission whatever—so certain he was that Peter was only bothering him with a bit of legal irrelevancy. And then, as he read, aloud, there in the silence of his little room, Peter Samuels quietly amused himself with making grimaces at a dull-looking prisoner over in one of the jail cells. The prisoner looked at Peter in a foolish, expressionless way. He, clearly enough, had given up all hope. He, in other words, had tried to whip the law—without first making it his own law. Peter came within an ace of shouting at him, "Knowledge is power, you rascal!" but he refrained.

A man must have *some* dignity, at least on the last day of his business career. He turned and faced the prosecutor again. That gentleman had read the title of the case (in a slow, pondering way, after the fashion of so many excellent lawyers) and now was come to the syllabus: "When a duly enrolled bill is placed in the custody of the Secretary of State, its authentication as a law of the United States is complete," etc.

By the time the prosecutor had finished reading the case, Peter had taken down another volume. "You have just read," said he to Grounch, "the law of the United States, the federal law. Now here is the law of the State of Starlight—with, I believe, many citations from the laws of sister states. These other state laws, are, I believe, of what you call 'persuasive authority.' Of course I am no lawyer."

Grounch could not take the volume up. He merely read it as it lay spread out before him, Peter with his large white hands keeping the volume open.

"I am also," Peter went on, softly, while the lawyer continued reading, "under the impression that the opinions of courts of last resort, are, for their own jurisdictions, the absolute law in subsequent cases. They even interpret the statutes and the constitution."

And what Grounch read was as follows: "Courts cannot go behind an enrolled and engrossed bill, properly authenticated, found in the office of the Secretary of State as a part of the records of that office. The reason for that rule is fully discussed

in Kelly *v.* Marron, and further consideration would serve no useful purpose."

Then Grindon Grounch tried to arise, and failed. He fairly rocked his head from side to side and roared. Not laughed. He roared and then yelled like the king of wild jackals with a bullet in his side—a terrible sound, an all-inspiring bellow that only gradually became intelligible.

"The law? Damn your law!" He tried to open a drawer in his desk, but Pete prevented him.

Said Peter, "You will hear a little more. There's not one lawyer in fifty who knows that this *is* the law. Your published 'Statutes' are not really the LAW. The LAW is the law as it lies in the office of the Secretary of State. That's why I cultivated the Secretary—"

"He's a forger," cried Grounch, "an alterer of documents. I will prosecute him—transgressors must pay."

"But the act as it lies in the Secretary's office is not in the Secretary's handwriting, not one word of it. It is wholly in that of the engrossing officer of the Senate."

"Then you two bought *him.*"

"I have no recollection to that effect," said Peter. "You might, of course, inquire either of the engrossing clerk or of the Secretary. It is much more likely that the engrossing clerk has simply made a mistake. We all make mistakes, and are not responsible for them so long as we make them honestly. At all events, beyond the LAW as it lies in the Secre-

tary's office you cannot go. Have you finished with me, Mr. Prosecutor? Good-bye."

He held out a jubilant hand. Grindon Grounch spat on it.

Peter could easily have closed that hand and beaten his old-time enemy to a legal pulp. But he kindly forebore. There was something much more serious in pickle for Mr. Grounch. Tonight. Meantime—Peter could gloat over the fact that there was nothing like knowledge of the law, together with a little wealth, a little influence.

Peter stepped to the door, opened it and said, like a triumphant king: "Constable, Mr. Grounch wants to speak to you."

Peter went out unmolested, and Mr. Constable went in, deferentially bowing to Mr. Samuels. That constable could not have arrested Peter at the time had he tried.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Trustee Discharged

Peter ran down the stairs, instead of taking the elevator. Never in all his experience had he had so wonderful an encounter by half as this just now. Victory! What a coincidence that such a combat should occur on the very last day of his whole long business career! Grounch had chosen well for *him*.

As he stepped into the street, he looked round. No Chinaman yet? No young Chinaman? Well, that was strange! He had really thought to see young China emerge from the little, hidden closet which he had keenly observed in a shadowy corner of the prosecutor's inner room. And no Chinaman yet! That was strange.

He began to wish that he might actually meet Patricia now. It was a boundless kind of day, when almost any wish might chance to come true, so he looked all round again. No Patricia? He started across the square, lost in golden dreams. Ah! this was life—the supreme moment of his existence! No, that would come just a little later—tonight, as he lay on his porch and listened, quietly listened.

Burley came by, and, in his big, bull-like bellow, greeted his old-time friend. Then he waved his hand. Still there was no response. "Lost! Dead lost in dreams!" quoth William to himself, as he went on. "Some day, soon or late, Pete Samuels 'll step in

front of an automobile, and then—either a dead Peter or a wrecked car, hard to tell which. Hope it'll be the car. Ain't no other man in Starlight that can lick *me.*"

Ever since Peter had threshed Burley, Burley had felt Peter's influence, especially his religious influence, more strongly. For many years Burley had worshipped the Master from afar. For years the splendid world of Burleyan imagination had revolved exclusively about Peter. It was just because of the fact that, in his inmost heart, Burley knew himself to be a sheer satellite of Peter, that he had so often and so terribly resisted Peter's influence, had so frequently joked that man in a way that would seem to belittle him, to make him a thing of insignificance, no influence whatever. In a jocular way he could say to his old-time friend and companion many a thing which he had really wanted to say to him in earnest and with the bitterness of gall. But, in Burley's dreams, a different world appeared, different altogether. Night after night, for years upon years, Burley had dreamed that he and Peter Samuels had walked together, hand in hand (as they never would have done in the world of actuality) by the side of a brimming stream. It was always night, and the whole sky was set with gleaming stars. Peter would discourse about the stars, and about what the stars might be taken to symbolize for us (as once he had really done in a sermon at the Peter Samuels church). And Peter would say that the stars were like angels in heaven,

looking down, looking down with infinite pity on the sins and errors of this lesser Starlight.

Then, as they would keep on walking, he and Peter together, hand in hand, they would come to a mysterious-looking ford of the river. And behold! a fearful shape and hideous would appear before them, gigantic and with destruction in its cavernous eyes, holding a drawn sword and crying: "It cometh to an end, William Burley, thy life, whatsoever thou hast made of it, it cometh to an end. Enter thou, then, this river, and go across."

Then William would scream, and turn in a great fright and cling to Peter. And Peter would speak to him about the stars looking down, which were like mighty angels that wished to see men brave in Christ. And then he would say, "I, too, shall soon be passing over, William. Then will I join thee. Be at peace."

And he would kiss William. And William would enter the deep waters of the stream, shouting: "I fear not at all to pass across."

Then he would suddenly awake, and throw the bedclothes away from him, protesting vigorously: "I care not at all for this damned sentiment."

Elizabeth, at first, had taken these words to signify that, in his heart, William Burley cherished a deep and sacred affection for some other woman than herself. But, whenever she urged the man to make a clean breast of the matter, he would grow so irritable and abusive that she would promptly cease

to question him. As the years passed, she grew resigned to the situation. William, so far as she had been able to ascertain, was conducting himself with due respect toward all women in this outer world, hence, if he liked, he might, for her part, become a veritable Mormon or Turk, in the world of his dreams. Was not that world his absolutely own, and no harm done? She at least, very certainly, had performed her duty.

But, even in the external world, Burley, in these latter and more degenerate days, stood like a man in a trance, utterly lost and somehow glad of it. Peter's threshing had thrown him, or else had finished throwing him, into a strange and almost beautiful state of mind. Had the various movements of Peter's neat, quick hands been so many passes of a skillful hypnotist, Burley could not have been more thoroughly and permanently mesmerized. Something beyond Burley, against his utmost will, was driving him to surrender to this great man—the idol of his youthful years, his sacred companion in the only perfectly pure and idealistic dream which he ever had had.

It was, in truth, as some other persons had realized, a much changed Peter that had come back to Starlight. But, to Burley, Peter did not seem to have suffered any particular deterioration. He merely seemed to have become a trifle firmer, to have acquired a yet more iron-like will. And both these changes, in Burley's humble estimation, were rather in the nature of improvements.

But, most of all, Peter had acquired his present ascendency over Burley by the clean, neat threshing. It was not at all that Burley had liked to be threshed. But Burley, in spite of his gluttonous habits, was a powerful man, who, in his days as brakeman on a railroad, had whipped all the fighters on his line. Then along comes Peter and threshes him easily, not in haste or with any apparent confusion, but calmly and as one who performs a necessary task which he well knows how to get through with.

And now, once more (and just as of old) only because of Peter's influence, Burley begins to want to build the church again. It was a strange situation this, but a veritable fact. Had it not been for Peter, Burley would never have wanted to build the great new church—not even as a monument to himself would he have wanted to build it.

One day there came into Burley's mind a great *new* idea with regard to this great new church. Ah-h-h! Just the thing exactly. But he would not talk with Peter at all about it, not just now. Wait till the time had come, would Burley, the fulness of the time. Then he would tell old Peter. He had always admired Pete, always loved him. Peter had always been square with him (had he not?), square with all his friends. Good old Pete! And the most truly religious man alive was Peter! Yes, he, Burley, would do that very thing.

So Peter Samuels, deteriorate though he had undoubtedly become, was still "the cause and full occasion" of lofty endeavor, of sacred, if not unmixedly

pure, endeavor in other men. A great personal inspiration in the great human city of Starlight, so much in need of inspiration.

When Peter had reached his bank, some one touched him gently on the shoulder. He looked up, rubbed his eyes. A young Chinaman, of very slender form and studious countenance. "Well, what's the countersign?" asked Peter.

The Chinaman said, with a low, tremulous voice, but in perfect English: "Where are the stones? Let them be as things that were kept most sacredly both for us and for Christ."

At first Peter did not answer. He was trying to recall whether or not the words of identification were correct. Said the Chinaman again, "Where are the stones?"

"In safety drawer 69, this bank."

"Shall we get them—now?"

"We will get them—now."

They entered the bank, and, taking the proper attendant with them, went down into the safety vault. Peter took out the stones, and handed them to the young Chinaman. The latter scrutinized them very carefully. "These," said he, at length, "these are the genuine, the identical stones. You have been faithful, very faithful. Here is your reward." He held out a little package, but Peter refused it.

They all went up above, and there the Chinaman gave further and quite sufficient proof of his own identity. He signed a release, and this was duly attested. Peter gave him the stones. "Go," said

he to the Chinaman, "back to your attorney and advisor, Mr. Grindon Grounch." The Chinaman hung his head. "Show him the stones," added Peter.

Peter was greatly delighted to remember with how much cunning and foresight he had written to his London friends, when the jewels had been fully redeemed, requesting that the treasure be transmitted to him secretly—so secretly in fact that no one other than they and himself could know of the redemption. Plainly, not even Mr. Grounch had ever been able to learn about that wonderful affair. What a surprise he would get very shortly from the solemnly exultant lips of Young China! And in what an appropriate mood he was, just now, to receive such a shock!

Peter went into his little room for the last time. There he looked a long while into the street again.

At length he returned to the lobby. "Boys," said he, "I'm going home. Never to return, I'm going home." All that were in the bank shook hands with Peter and wished him happiness, long life.

Peter walked into the street. Daylight was verging toward darkness.

CHAPTER XXXIV

What Great Things a Little Fire Destroyeth

Pat had completed her preparations, and now was only waiting, waiting. That was the hardest thing she had had to do yet—wait. She could just as well have quitted the house tonight, only there were certain things she had wanted to pack tomorrow. The big clock of her father's grandfather, all her family's relics, these she would take with her. She simply could not leave them. She would have these things and her own private fortune, that was all. The beast could have the rest of everything, even—No, he could *not* have their love letters. Lucky she thought of them.

She went to a little casket in her closet, and, bringing the box out, opened it and removed the letters. A faint, old-fashioned perfume issued gently forth. There were just twenty-one letters—seven from Peter to her, fourteen from her to Peter. It had always been so, she thought: the loving had always been on just her side. On her husband's part, their marriage had never been anything else than a matter of business. Pah!

She took the letters one by one, and tore them first widthwise then lengthwise. The hard tears started, but she held her trembling lips tight between set teeth. The beast! She laid the tiny fragments (nothing now but a handful of waste paper)

down on the grate—the beautiful grate that Peter had insisted on installing in her room—but that was long years ago now.

Suddenly she thought of something else—the baby's flowers and little clothes. She felt it was a kind of punishment to Peter to destroy these also. Easily enough she found them, and, having added a crumpled newspaper to the bits of letters, laid upon it the clothes and the wax-preserved flowers. Then she touched a lighted match to the whole.

Hark! What a roar the pile made! Never had she known that such trifles could make so mighty a flame—such a hoarse, hollow, resounding bellow. Up, up the flue—higher, higher. Louder went the bellowing—louder, louder.

Then, of a sudden, the flame sank, the noises ceased. The house appeared to be submerged in silence. There was just one bit of soft white flannel lying out toward her unconsumed. With a cry she rushed to the grate, snatched up the char-edged rag, brought it tightly to her bosom, and ran to press her face against the edge of a book-case door. Then she closed her tired eyes.

How long she stood with her forehead held against the hard edge of the wood, she could not have told. But, after a while, she felt blood streaming down her face. Then she opened her eyes, and, seeing glass a little to the other side of her, she thought it the glass of some window, and moved till her eyes became straight opposite, then tried to peer out into what she took to be a street. And she wondered, won-

dered why she could see in the street no objects but books.

She heard Peter coming home. This was his last return from business, from the bank. She would not go toward him. She would see what he would do, the beast.

He was singing. What was it he sang? "Jesus, lover of my soul." "You're a great man," she cried in her heart, "to be singing religious songs!"

Now he had reached the front porch, had stepped upon it. Then he stepped off again, and went and spoke sharply to Uncle Henry. But just what he said to the negro, she could not catch.

She heard him enter the hall, loiter for a time there, then pass into the living room, and so, having walked about a little there and also in her study, go out by yet another door and on the back porch. The beast! His last day at the bank, the very last of all his homecomings, and still he did not look her up, seek her out, attempt a reconciliation. Her heart hardened once more, and she took a solemn vow, that never again in all this world would she try to love Peter Samuels, or so much as speak kindly to him, or even to greet him in conventional ways, should she meet him on the street.

She listened to Peter's movements on the porch, hating, hating.

CHAPTER XXXV

God's Door, That Was Shut on the Past

Peter had left the bank in a wonderfully fine frame of mind. He felt a little fulness in the head, some vertigo and a decided ringing in the ears. But he had been going full tilt for some days now, some weeks or months even, so he did not wonder at all at that. Moreover, on a day like this—his very last day—it almost seemed as if the whole world should be giddy.

But all day long—that greatest day that ever yet had been—the world had kept toiling on, toiling on, very much as usual. It was still toiling on, even though night had almost come. All Starlight was just about the same as ever. The streets were full of the old-time tumult, people still rushed about. Everything prophesied the old, strange continuity of commerce, which would probably not be even so much as jarred by Peter's passing out of it. It would be just so, no doubt, when Peter was dead, when he was gone forevermore.

O the toiling, the spinning, the hurrying, the sweating, the struggling, the fighting, the losing, the winning—and he no part of it. Not any more a figure in the scene, only a person outside looking on. He should be enjoying, of course.

How mightily the pulse of business seemed to be beating, this starlit eve in Starlight! Peter felt the

steady throb-throb. Strong, strong! Or did he but feel so strongly the life in his own veins that he ascribed that powerful vitality to his very surroundings?

What a multitude of interests had their headquarters here! Over to the left he beheld the bright dome of the University; there to the right was the State House; here was the jail (he looked on the jail with amusement); there behind him, the bank; yonder a dozen hive-like office-buildings in a darkling row. Government, law, education, money, trade and commerce, literature and art, vice and crime, goodness and wisdom! A united charities building! Schools and schools and schools again! And churches—all about him were churches: take your choice.

Of a sudden there came, as, at intervals, there now and then does come, in any great city, a striking cessation of noise—a curious coincidence of innumerable little silences.

How still, how still! Why, here at the very crossing of Cash Lane and Dollar Avenue—if only things were always just as they were now—a man could very appropriately be buried and then left in more seclusion and soft silence than in an outside cemetery.—What was that? He started, as a flying machine clattered high above, then journeyed away and away like a great, dark, noisy angel into the distant night.

Peter, when he had crossed the river, heard rapid steps behind, and turned. "Straight!"

Straight was wearing an odd look. "Have you any desire," he asked, as he came up to Peter, "that you cannot now gratify?"

"Yes, I'd like to live forever."

"Well, I'm afraid that instead of having your wish fulfilled, you are simply giving up all there can possibly be in life for a man of your active temperament. This is really the end?"

"The end. What ungratified wish have *you*, Doctor?"

"To see the world get well. I am tired of sickness—sickness, sickness, sickness and pain. I do not behold any necessity or even desirability in such things. They are very terrible, sickness and pain. Very terrible and very useless. Pain, pain, pain! And sickness, sickness! God, if thou dost exist—"

Peter was surprised that Straight was speaking so emotionally. He was silent for a long time. Then he changed the subject. "Doctor, I am really worried about Pat." He spoke just a little thickly, as a man does who has a bit of dry powder in his mouth. Straight was much too tired to notice. "I'm really worried about her, Straight. The child is not well. She's been much unlike herself since—O since a very long time ago. I want you to see her—in the morning. Don't bother about it tonight, but come early in the morning."

Straight promised to come. Leaving Peter, he turned in the way of his own office and home.

Peter went on till he had got opposite his church. Why, what a strange place it seemed now! Full of

soft singing! He had not been noticing that edifice very much of late. This was prayer-meeting night. The singing ceased, and then a speaking voice—not that of the preacher, he could be quite sure—came out of the open window. Peter stopped to listen.

"There's many a business man in this country," said the voice, "who is needed by the Lord—needed as apostle, as evangelist, and who, though called again and yet again, responds not. How the Lord needs them—their efficiency, their power to organize, to manage, especially their deep and sympathetic knowledge of the human heart!" "Probably a man with not a dollar in his pocket," thought Peter. He went amusedly on.

What a feeling of energy he had! How his hot blood pulsed! So strong he was and so full of super-abounding necessity to do something very vigorous that he opened his lips and sang, loudly:

> "Jesus, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly!"

He came now, swinging and singing up his own private walk, self-conscious and as full of deadly power as some old barbaric potentate who could order life or death according to his whim.

When he reached the magnolia tree, he stopped. There it stood as of old—big and strong, and bright and sweetly smelling—as if filled with the odor of sanctity itself. What a splendid-looking tree!

He recalled that there had been something a little amiss with the tree, and stepped off the walk to

examine the trunk more closely. High overhead his sensitive ear caught the sound of a little honey-bee, winging for its unseen home with the day's sweet load of well-earned treasure. Or was it just the humming in his own ears? Ah well— As he now could plainly observe, there was growing at the foot of the magnolia, a bunch of horrible red and yellow fungi. He pushed with the toe of his shoe against the black-looking base. It went deep into the tree. Up amid the lower branches, at the very first knot-hole—still more fungi. The heart of the tree was rotten. Yet the great landmark stood up proudly, like a luminous candlestick, shedding light and incense out over Dollar Avenue.

A sudden surge of terrific anger swept over the man. That infernal negro! He had neglected the tree. It was all the nigger's fault. Just at this moment he glimpsed the stooped form of old Uncle Henry, working, working over some rose bushes not far away. Peter went up on the porch, then stepped off again.

He called Henry to him, gave him six sharp words, worse than six blows of the fist, and strode into the house.

Uncle Henry turned very slowly away, softly raised a great soiled arm up over his eyes, and steadily shook. After a time, with a groan, he took down his arm. Then he proceeded in the direction of the tool-house—in which dim district of the yard his tearful eyes had caught sight of the skulking form of some other negro.

Peter, having entered the hall, took off his light overcoat and hat and hung them on the tree. Where was Patricia? The house was very still. Why was she not here to meet him, after this, the crowning victory of his life? She was not well, that was all the trouble. Straight, tomorrow, would attend to her. He went into the living room. No Patricia. Patricia must be busy upstairs. She could not, of course, be now in her bedroom, else she had surely, on a night like this, come running forth to meet him with outstretched arms. No matter what the past might have been, she would have come. Or, perhaps—he waved the thought of Patricia aside with an impatient gesture. If Patricia did not want to come, she did not have to. He was not the man to hunt her up. Yet he did, next, go into her study.

He stood behind the low, straight-backed chair that Patricia had always been so fond of. He patted it just a little. The house was so still, so still. Patricia was probably over at Elizabeth's. The vacant chair, the bare desk, the typewriter with its black hood, the whole tiny apartment, seemed strangely deserted, like some home after death.

It was a warm night, yet the room appeared to be filled with damp, heavy, coolish air—like, as one might say, the air of an ice-house. There was the same earthy smell.

Here was the place where she had once kissed him good-night—several years ago. There against the window pane, on a sunny day, he had watched an overenergetic blue-bottle fly thump itself into

oblivion. Not often had he stopped to witness any such trivial matter as that.

For a while he stood listening intently. A motor bus had just thundered by, and the house trembled. He then quit thinking about Patricia. The room lay to the west. A red shimmer came into it, and, for a moment, appeared to cover all things with the deep color of blood. The hue slowly died away. He went out on the back porch. There the eternal stars, looking down from infinite distances, made his loneliness the greater.

But his heart, for all his loneliness, was somehow transcendently elated. Moreover, the porch was a good place to wait on. His head swam a bit. He believed he would lie down. Ah-h-h! This everlasting buzzing in his ears! There remained now only—

As he thought of revenge, a vast, kindly spirit of charity made all things seem very pleasant. He hoped the Greek would not forget, not become queasy or scared. True, for real success in this matter a good many people would have to die, but then—most of them lived like cattle anyway, and we slaughtered cattle daily without the least compunction. At all events, this coming event would mean the absolute destruction, financially at least, of Grindon Grounch and his associates. As regarded the human lives which it would cost, he would try to make that up by being especially good to everybody else hereafter.

The clocks about the house began striking. Was it eight o'clock or nine? He had really forgotten

to count strokes. "Eight" he believed. No later than that? He had thought it must be past midnight.

He was neither tired nor tense. Through all his frame beat the hot blood, the hot blood, the hot blood. He was, in condition, still a youngish man. Not many men of his age, at all events, had a strongly beating heart like this, or such a tight, magnificent pulse, racing on, racing on. He felt of its beating at his wrist for a long time with peculiar satisfaction. Poor Pat! Too bad she didn't have a good strong pulse like that. Yes, really too bad.

It was at this point in his thoughts that he began to notice the heavy tread of passing feet, over there along the public walk on Dollar Avenue. Then he remembered that all the Croatian workmen in the quarries (and these were the most of those in the night shift) walked to their work each night from over in Slumtown, just to save car-fare. It must be strange, he thought, to have to reckon the difference between a ten-cent car-fare and a nickel's worth of shoe-leather. On they came, thicker and thicker, faster and faster. He felt quite sure that the Greek would not weaken or forget. And some of us must die: that was inevitable.

Just at this moment he thought he heard the slamming of a heavy door.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Old Allegiance

Poor Pat! She, on her part, had heard her husband go out on the porch, had caught the sound of his "Ah-h-h!" as he lay down on the divan—a man so tired he knew not of his own fatigue.

Then all was steady stillness.

No, he would not come to her. He did not care for her at all, and he would not come. She believed he must have gone to sleep now, he was so very silent.

She was standing by a little side-door that opened from her chamber to the porch on which Peter lay. She unclosed the door a little, yet a little more. She heard Peter breathing very heavily, very heavily.

Then she thought that he ceased to breathe.

Or did she just imagine that he was not breathing? He had probably (she reflected) just stopped breathing for a moment, as anybody will when sleeping, and so he would soon, of course, start breathing once again.

With closed eyes she listened for some time, perhaps for a whole hour, even longer. She became very eager, leaned a little, now and again, on the door jamb for support. Sometimes she was wholly lost in painful memories or forecasts.

Then, spite of her immense pride, and with a feeling that what she was doing did not become her, she

snapped the porch light on, and quickly stepped, or, rather, stepped and stumbled, along the porch and so to Peter.

Just for a moment she gazed at him. Then she uttered one piercing cry: "Peter! My angel and my God!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

Let's Help Little Miss

When Uncle Henry had received the six sharp words from Peter Samuels, he, for a time, had wept heavily with an arm across his eyes. But, a good while later, hearing a strange sound from the shadowy district of the garage, he looked in the way of the sound, and saw, as he supposed, and rightly, the form of his scapegrace nephew, Mr. Recent Green. Recent appeared to be beckoning to him.

Henry moved slowly across the lawn, and, as he came within a few feet of his nephew, observed that the latter was holding in his hand a rolled-up sheet of paper.

"Halt!" cried Recent in a hoarse whisper. "Stand and deliver, old man."

"Whuffor you say, 'Stan' an' deliver'?"

"Insurance. I'm collectin' now for the Abraham Lincoln All-American Life Insurance Co. Yo' dues am due."

"You been fired fum de bank, Recent?"

"Yassuh. Fired. Whut's de matter wif *you,* old man?"

"Mistuh Petuh Samyules suh, he—" Uncle Henry broke down and wept anew.

"You been fired also? Yes, an' likewise?"

Uncle Henry nodded. "Gimme de gran' bounce.

Jes' now. Been hyeh six-an'-fohty yeah, an' yet now he done gimme de gran' bounce."

"He can't gran' bounce nobody, aftuh you done gone an' promise de fohmuh ownuh of de premises. Whyn't ye tell him to see a lawyuh?"

"I done did tell him—yistiddy, when he only *talk* 'bout my leavin'. An' he laugh. Den I tink mebbe I in de wrong myself, an' so I done went an' seen er lawyuh yistiddy ebenin'. He say, de lawyuh—"

"Whut *did* he say?"

"He say de promise ain' bindin' on nobody. 'Straint on alienation, er somepin' like dat. Anyway, he say, 'Uncle Henry, ef Mistuh Petuh say you have to go, suh, you have to go.' Now Mistuh Petuh he done gimme de gran' bounce, an' I hatter go."

He and Recent went into the tool-house, and discussed the situation for a long time. But they found no clear solution of Uncle Henry's difficulty. Recent, of course, was doing well enough. Collections were good, and then, at night, he made a little—erhum—on de side.

"You ain't gwine keeps dat up, is ye?" asked Uncle Henry.

"Dat ain' de question," evaded Recent. "De question befo' de meetin' am, is you gwine pay up an' keeps dis policy goin'? Er is you, on de udder han', gwine let it go—lapse, become no 'count, an' altogether null an' invalid?"

Uncle Henry shook his head and dolefully groaned. "Don't know what's gwine 'come of me while I'm

still livin'. Tain't no use, Recent. Nobody else won't give me no job. Too ol'."

"Don't see why. You sho has done er lot o' hahd work for Mistuh Petuh Samuels. Cose it's a little diffunt, tryin' to get a *new* place. Lots o' young men competin'. Say, Uncle Henry," he cried with sudden enthusiasm, "didn't you an' good Aunt Henrietta jes' fairly brunged me up, aftuh my own mudduh died? Sholy you did. An' now, I'm gwine recompense you. I'm gonna keep up yo' policy fer Aunt Henrietta's sake. En den, in addition—"

He suddenly stopped. A wild, piercing scream came from the back porch of the house.

Uncle Henry leaped to his feet in spite of his rheumatism, and shouted: "Ef en dat dere Petuh Samyules am hittin' little Miss P'tricia, I'm gwine kill 'im."

Recent caught up with him, and they attained the porch together.

When they had carried the body into the house, and, in Patricia's own room, had laid it on her very own bed, then Recent it was who phoned for Dr. Straight, Patricia being incapacitated. And when he beheld the doctor coming, he fled straightway to the flower garden, where, in great silence and awe, he remained, waiting, waiting, till Uncle Henry came forth from the solemn house and joined him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Phantasmata

Peter Samuels, meanwhile, was having a strange experience during the long two hours and more while Patricia, with her eyes tight closed, and with her soul steeped in pride and fear and silence, stood by her slightly opened door.

Having heard, as he thought, a distant heavy door or piece of moving furniture jar, he awoke out of a strange, bewildering dream, or else into it, got off the lounge and went gently, for fear of awakening Pat, down the porch steps to the back lawn, then, through the silvered dark, to the garage.

Here, strangely, he met the Greek who, on the day of his sermon, had cried out: "Zeeto ee Ellas! Zeeto ee Amerikee!" and to whom Peter had spoken about the quarry. The man came quickly up to him and said, "I have done the thing you asked. Give me the rest of the money." Peter gave it to him, and cursed the man away.

Then said Peter to himself, "I will stroll down town now and see how the city accepts the news. If I run across Grounch, I'll see how *he* takes it."

Out, therefore, from his yard and upon Dollar Avenue. Now past the dark, silent, dreaming church. Then across the river with its bosom full of ancient stars, and so on and on to mingle with

the mighty crowds there on the busy ways and walks about State House.

As he came before an all-night restaurant, a newsboy rushed out, crying: "Extra! Extra! Peter Samuels just died! O *uxtree!*"

Peter went to the boy, and laughing at the mistake, asked for a paper. But the boy did not notice him in the slightest, and only ran on. Other paper boys breezed by, and to each and all Peter appealed, offering bright silver dollars in exchange for just one copy of the "uxtree." But still the boys paid no attention to him. It began to come over Peter Samuels that perhaps he was, after all, really dead.

Strangely enough, he did not seem to be greatly offended or worried by the situation. He was only curious, curious in particular to see what the newspapers might possibly have to say about the defunct Peter Samuels.

Two night workmen came along, and one bought a paper. They both then went up beneath a brightly illuminated sign to read concerning the great banker who had just died.

Peter, close beside them, listened intently.

"Not a bad picture," adjudged one of the workmen in a solemn voice.

"No," responded the other. "But looks more like Peter as he *used* to look. Changed a lot, Pete did, just in the last few years."

"Yes. Got to be a kind of king of dollars or something."

"All right—good old Peter, even at that. I'll read you now. See what it says."

The community is shocked and grieved beyond all measure by the desolating death of one of Starlight's most prominent citizens, Mr. Peter Samuels. Mr. Samuels was one of the most remarkable and most widely known and best loved personalities of his day.

Mr. Samuels had just sold his interest in the Starlight First National Bank and in numerous other financial institutions of this and other cities, preparatory to his final retirement from all active participation in further business. He had been president of the Starlight First National for many years, and had been so prominently identified with all its interests, all its plans and policies, that that institution was oftener called "The Peter Samuels Bank" than by its own proper and legal designation.

An extended obituary of Mr. Samuels will appear in our regular issue, but, at present, we must content ourselves with saying that Mr. Samuels was born in San Francisco, the product of old American stock intermingled with much new immigrant blood. He lost both parents in early childhood, came eastward to the State of Starlight at the age of seventeen, and, having already received a high school diploma, entered the Midwest Missionary College, with the intention of becoming either a home minister or a foreign missionary. Certain financial enterprises, however, which were founded by Mr. Samuels during his one college year, having proved unusually successful, his attention was thereby turned to business and finance, and he became a banker. No one can say that, as God's great business man, Mr. Samuels has been less useful to the

world of religion and to the whole community than he might have been had he stood steadily by his first intention and become a minister. His benefactions, both religious and other, were innumerable. Many a thriving young business man or woman in our city and state owes the commencement of a successful career to the friendliness, kindness, and liberality of Mr. Peter Samuels. At the time of his death, Mr. Samuels was contemplating the erection of a sumptuous church building where is still standing the so-called Peter Samuels church edifice. Just what will happen to this project now, cannot be stated.

Mr. Samuels married, early in life, Miss Patricia Purington, by whom he had one child, a son, who died in infancy. Mr. and Mrs. Samuels have always lived at the old Purington place, at the intersection of Church Street and Dollar Avenue, and immediately across the street from the Peter Samuels church.

Mr. Samuels, yesterday afternoon, walked down to his home after his last day of business (last indeed!) had been completed. On his way to his home he was met and joined by Dr. Darwin Straight, who accompanied him for about two blocks, and then left him, apparently, in very high spirits and his usual physical condition. The doctor, however, states that Mr. Samuels had for a very long time been "burning the candle at both ends," for which reason he, the doctor, had, as personal friend and professional adviser of Mr. Samuels, been obliged, on numerous occasions, to caution the financier against the possible consequences of too intense and prolonged application. With his usual absorption in his work, however, Mr. Samuels had only in part heeded the doctor's words.

Arrived home, Mr. Samuels went out on his back porch, and lay down to rest. There he fell into the sleep that knows no awakening—for, in his dreams, as so often happens to people with high blood pressure, he had suffered a stroke of apoplexy.

The funeral arrangements have not yet been made, but will be announced later in these columns.

One of the men was crying. The other—he who had read the death notice—declared emphatically, "God sent him. Peter Samuels had his faults, especially of late years, but nevertheless, thank God for Peter Samuels!"

Then said the other man, "Read now about the quarries."

The man that held the paper looked half way down the page and began:

Fearful explosion! Multitudes killed at Church Rock! Hundreds perish as either premature or belated blast goes off in quarry. The worst accident occurring in the State of Starlight in many years took place at about three o'clock this morning when either a premature or a belated explosion occurred in the quarry at Church Rock. The whole night shift was on, and was working closely packed together at what is called "the third end face of passage No. 2," when the premature (or belated) detonation occurred. More than five hundred workers were killed immediately, and hundreds more were injured, many of whom will probably die. Others will be maimed for life. Fragments of limbs, bodies and heads are blown over all the landscape, and even some professional nurses who had been in the War and therefore had been pretty well seasoned to sights

of suffering and blood, are said to have been unable to endure the consequences of the awful tragedy. Bad enough it was to view the mutilated dead, but to hear the cries of the mutilated living—those who, but a few hours since, were strong and cheerful and gladly laboring for their families—these things many of the nurses could not stand.

At this there came up an excited woman of the working class, holding two tiny, tearful children by the hands. One of these was crying, "Mother! Mother! Is Daddy dead? Mother, I want Daddy."

The woman came up to the man who was reading. "Jack," cried she, in an agonized voice, "does it give the names? Does it give any of the names?"

Then both the children shrieked together. "Our daddy is dead. We know he is dead, and we want our daddy back."

Peter Samuels struggled terribly to make himself heard. He leaped upon the two men, crying: "You lie! You lie! I did NOT kill them." And he would have beaten the men more terribly than he did, or seemed to be doing, but that someone (he turned and saw that it was a policeman) held his left arm and had twined a great strong limb round his left leg, and so, in part at least, was holding him.

Peter struggled and cried again, "A lie! A lie!"

All at once he began to see that the policeman and all the other people were fading, fading. They faded very slowly out yonder into the sky—yonder exactly

where he now was looking. And they had become nothing but little bits of fleecy cloud.

But Peter was still in an agony, because of the crime he had done. "Patricia!" he shouted, or attempted to shout. "Patricia! Patricia!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

Sin's Sister, Sorrow

"If you will focus just a little nearer earth and home, Peter," said a familiar voice close at hand, "you will see Patricia."

Peter slowly came to focus in the proper manner, and then saw Pat. He was flat on his back. Plainly he had just been looking through the great front window of his own living room.

"How did I get in here? It was night, I thought."

He did not hear the answer, but was off in a wild dream again. It appeared that Patricia had left him, and had run out into the street. He was foolish enough to get up and try to run after her.

But he could not run very fast. Something had happened to his left side and leg. So he tried to shout to Patricia. But his throat was cramped and sore and little. "Patricia! Patricia!" Then he beheld her again.

She was looking at him with infinite love and pity. She was very close beside him, too, and she bent over and put her two dear arms around him—just as in the old, old days.

He tried to respond by putting his own arms around her. Only his right arm went forth. He became angry, and cursed the disobedient member. Yet still it would not move. He picked it up with

his right hand. "O Peter, dear, don't do that, please. O don't!"

He dropped the left arm, and it fell like an arm of lead.

He put his right hand up to his forehead. Something queer had overtaken him. What was it? What? He couldn't think. That was just the trouble: he couldn't quite think.

He tried to tell Pat that he couldn't think, but his tongue twisted awkwardly, and he said only: "Touldn't fink"—like a child.

"You have been paralyzed, Peter. We can't keep the news from you, you know. You have had a stroke—just a very, very mild stroke of course—And you must not talk."

Peter looked upon her steadily. "Where've you kept yourself all this long time?"

"Right here, beside you. You've had another nurse, but most of the time I've been beside you. Don't talk. I will tell you the whole story—there's nothing to worry about in it. Last Wednesday night you had a little stroke—"

"What's this?"

"Sunday."

"Sleep a long time."

"Yes, you have slept a long time, and it's done you a great deal of good. Dr. Straight says you'll certainly live now, and, if you're obedient—" She laid a finger to her lips, "you'll completely recover the use of your paralyzed left side."

"Doctor's liar. Makes folk cheerful." Peter

closed his eyes for a time. When he had opened them again, Patricia went on: "The doctor says that it's probably not so much a rupture of a blood vessel (though it may be that also) as just an edema—edema, that is, of the brain. If it's only an edema, you'll probably get entirely well. But there's quite an element of nervous exhaustion too in your case, and you'll have to lie quiet for a long time. Don't forget. Quiet now. Quiet."

He slipped off into dreams again, and when he had once more awakened, he asked: "Is Burley here? I thought I saw Burley, Burley and some of the people from my own bank."

"Yes, Mr. Burley's been here, and a number of the people from your own bank. Also, several other visitors. But they staid just a moment each. And they've all left you flowers."

It was night. A curious light on the stand was throwing a mesmeric illumination over the familiar room.

He slept and awoke and it was day again. Straight came, gave further assurance of recovery—if Peter would only do as he was directed—and then went away.

He came and went for weeks, and Peter was much better.

Then, one day, Peter noticed that lawyer Sharp had come into the house, but did not come to see him. Peter recalled that, just before his illness, he had heard that Sharp had become a very heavy owner in the quarries along with Grindon Grounch. All of

a sudden the thought of the explosion which he had planned for the quarries, swept over him. Strange he had forgotten all about the explosion, that terrible, terrible explosion. There must be something crooked in his memory, that he had forgotten the explosion all these days. Stranger still that he was not really anxious now that the explosion should have occurred. What a terrible thing, an explosion and many deaths! He cried out to Pat to bring him a newspaper—a newspaper dated the same day as his stroke, that one and the next day after. Pat, very curiously, paid no attention. She had always run so promptly heretofore. He could hear her talking, talking with Sharp, but could not quite make out the exact words. He wondered if the Greek had kept his promise. He sincerely hoped not. What a tremendous difference just a little sickness like this, just a little helplessness and time for plain thinking, had made in his attitude toward the quarry, toward his plans about it, toward many other serious matters too.

He tried to lie still, but his body would shake, and red, dripping visions would swim across the blank wall.

Patricia had been to the telephone a time or two, and now Dr. Straight arrived; also, a little later, Messrs. Toplofty and Burley. These gentlemen did not any of them come into the room where Peter lay, but went on down the long hall to join Pat and Lawyer Sharp. When the entire group had conferred together for a very long time, they all quitted the

house, except of course Pat. And she came into Peter's room with her head averted.

Of a sudden, into the house returned Straight. He then made a potion, and gave it to Peter to drink. "You'll feel better after that," assured he. "All the passing storms of life can't hurt you very much when you're under the influence of a draft like that." He looked at Peter with a great pity in his tired eyes, those eyes that had seen so very much of human suffering, human sorrow, human death. Then he was gone, and Peter and Pat were quite alone together.

The wife slowly moved to Peter's bedside, dropped to her knees, and gathered her husband's body in her quivering arms very tightly.

"Pat! Pat! Could you not hear me calling just a while ago?" He was very irritable indeed. "Pat! Newspapers I want! Newspapers of the day I took sick, that day and the next day after."

Pat, for a time, said nothing at all. She only held her husband tighter and tighter still. Then, with her arms yet around him, she closed her eyes, and he knew that she was praying.

And Peter, as he looked upon her, wondered. For he saw in her face not so much a return of the old-time rapt worship of himself, as a transcendent, if very sorrowful, significance, the like of which he had never yet seen in her face before: a subtle sweetness of all sweet sainthood, a fire of all great thought and inextinguishable devotion. She became indeed, as he kept gazing upon her, like the very essence

of prayer; so that he saw before him, as he thought, prayer visible—not a picture of prayer, or of some one praying, or trying to pray, but prayer's very self. Yet he himself, strangely, could not pray. He wanted to pray. Patricia, looking as she did, made him very much want to pray. And yet he could not pray. For a long, long time now, he had not prayed.

Pat at length hid in her husband's bosom her prayer-filled face, till only her bright hair showed. Then she sobbed, "O God, forgive me that I helped not Peter to avoid this terrible thing, our bankruptcy."

So she broke the news.

Then for a long time she kept kneeling, motionless and with her face well hidden, her wonderful face. Only her bright hair showed.

Peter it was who, at length, first spoke. "Pat, I believe the other side's gone too."

Then Pat rose, and, shrieking, "No! no, not this, God, not this," rushed madly against the nearest wall. Somewhat sobered by the impact, she gently moved, moaning and groaning, out into the deeper portions of the house. Thence, some minutes afterward she returned with her face still bleeding and with a glass of something in her hand. "Straight's," she choked. "In case—you were to drink it."

Peter drank, shuddered. She saw a strange look on his face, like that of one turning at a door to say, "Remember."

With quick suspicion jerking down the coverlid,

she found that Peter held in his hand a sharp fruit-knife, which, somehow, he had got from the tea tray in her absence. In a flash she had taken the knife away from him. "You're *not* paralyzed on both sides."

"You do it, then, Pat."

She did not answer, but stood holding the knife behind her in both hands. The eyes, the reproachful eyes of Patricia!

"You can say it was I that did it, and the insurance will be paid you. I shall be out of your way then."

The postman came, and one single small letter shoved through the slot in the hall front door. Peter, like a condemned man, watched the light thing float to the rug—watched it first with stupid, speechless anger, then with sad, sad indifference. "Just a circular," he moaned. "There's a circular in the hall, Pat, dear. Get it. I'm still worth sending a little circular to. You see, they haven't found all out about me yet. God damn my accursed soul. Pat! Pat, was there poison in that draught you gave me? I wouldn't blame you."

"O do not talk so, dear Peter. You frighten me. Do not say such awful things."

"Some fools blossom early, and some blossom late. I have blossomed both late and soon. All my detestable life has just been a struggle for possessions. Now some one else possesses them. Grounch—I knew he was— Tell me how it all happened."

Pat told him, in a few words. Peter had built a

great financial structure, but built it upon sand. In his haste to retire, he had converted his interests too freely from the institutions which he himself had built up and thoroughly understood. Furthermore, in order to batter down the prices of securities which he had wished to purchase, because they would be but little trouble to him, he had given to the institutions whereon they were based, great, deep wounds from which they had not afterward been able to recover. Especially the Starlight and Southeastern had gone to nothing, although he had wished to build that up, absolutely nothing—involving other ruin with it. He was not, therefore, worth five cents on the dollar, if the truth must be told.

"Pat! *Your* fortune! Tell me! I would not touch it, you know. But I merely want to understand for certain that *you* are safe."

"I, dear Peter, went to financial pieces even before you did. I—I—learned about myself while still you were asleep and wandering. I had bet chiefly that the Starlight and Southeastern would fail. I was in fact trying to wreck it."

"Wreck it! Did you say, 'wreck it'?"

"You were betting it would win. I thought I would just bet the other way, so that, if one of us should lose, the other would be sure to succeed. It was only necessary that one of us should certainly succeed. *You* lost, because that railroad went to pieces. *I* should have gained quite as much as you had lost, only—only—my broker—in New York, the same young man that bragged about you so on the

train that day—he was dishonest—or something—anyway he failed too, just at the wrong time for me, Peter. So he lost my winnings. There is nothing for either of us now. O dear Peter, I did so want to surprise you with a very big fortune of my own. I kept my broker informed, informed, informed all the time about your plans just as fast as you would tell me concerning them. I *wanted* to win. I *didn't* want to lose. It didn't much matter which one of us succeeded—if only one. I was proud, desired it to be me that should win. O God! O Peter, do not look at me so. You will kill me."

He saw Pat's intense suffering, and craved to spare her, yet could not. He was filled with a fearful compassion for her, pitied her especially for being tied to such a husband—bankrupt, knave, paralytic, fool. He would have done anything in his silly power to relieve her from such a contamination as himself. Yet, to cease talking he could not. "God damn," said he, "my soul to hell."

She went, then, into the corridor, and picked the little missive up. Returned with it, flopping it idly, idly in her fingers, as one who sought in trivial acts of the flesh a soul's infinite outlet. It was not just money she had lost—Peter, everything, even God, for she could not keep God without Peter. She began to sing—some old, sweet ballad that Peter had loved in the blessed days of their courtship. She did not know why she sang it: it was not at all a fitting thing to sing then. But she had become a mere automaton. She would never again know why

she did anything. She was only a dead machine now.

"Pat! O Pat!" cried Peter. "Don't look like that, I tell you. You remind me of a maniac I saw once in an insane asylum. Are you going mad? Don't then. What's in that letter, what's in it? Hell. A dun!"

"I think so, Peter. It could not well be anything else."

"Let me see."

She gave him the note, and went into another part of the room, standing there idly and staring at nothing.

"San Antonio, Texas." Thus Peter, reading the postmark. Then he gave a cry so bitter and shrill that Patricia turned and came near him again.

"Yes," he went on, "a dun. 'A dun,' as you say, and 'of course.' Taxes on the old aunt's dusty sections down there in Tartarus. What an old fool! What an old fool, our aunt!" He laughed again, sardonically. "Almost as big a fool as I, her nephew."

"Or I, Peter."

"You never did anything foolish, except when you married me."

He crumpled the letter in his hand. Pat was singing the old song, and it made him yet more irritable. He did not even recognize the song. "I say you never did anything foolish except when you married me."

"And *I* say, dear Peter, that the only wisdom I

have ever displayed in all my overlong existence was when I first allured and then accepted you.

"So I will work for thee, my love,
Till both my thumbs are bone."

She went on singing the old ballad, which seemed to have some appropriateness now.

All at once, in his old-time sudden, impetuous and affectionate way, Peter cried out: "The letters, Pat! Our old love letters. Bring— They will keep me—keep me from going mad." His voice had taken on an almost infinite tenderness. "Pat, the letters! Our dear old, old love letters, Pat. Get them, dearest. Get them quick. Get them."

"I will get them," she said in a sobbing throat. And very quietly she moved away, pretending that she was going to get the treasures that she knew to be eternally gone.

The last sentence that she uttered, as she went into the dark, big hall was: "I'm not very sure—Peter dear—that I—can remember—just now—just where I put them last."

CHAPTER XL

The Legacy of Laughter

A moment later she had run back into Peter's room. "O Peter! Peter! What is the matter, dear Peter? You must not sit up, Peter. You really mustn't."

Peter, in spite of all commands and in spite of his paralyzed left side, had sat bolt upright on the edge of his bed. His eyes were almost starting from their sockets—Patricia could not tell whether from pleasure or from pain. It was a strangely acting person, even for Peter.

"A tax bill? A tax bill?" he shouted. "Read *that!* Read it, I say. Read it, and don't be a thousand years at reading it, either."

Then he would not let her have the letter, of course, but read it himself. He read it again and again. Then yet again.

Patricia at last took the letter from him, and read it. When she could do anything else than read, she exclaimed, simply: "Your poor old Aunt Jemima!" Then she and Peter, having finished with still more readings, looked at each other steadily and with unspeakable astonishment. Both together: "Poor old Aunt Jemima, whom we made so very much fun of! Poor old Aunt Jemima!"

Then each in turn, "Poor old Aunt Jemima!" as if he thought just those four simple words the most

astounding and the most precious in the English language.

Well, as they read the missive together again, and again and again and again and again, like children reciting in school, it finally came out of the document and into their respective intelligences, that the old, old barren sections of Aunt Jemima had all these years had under them oil. Some one, on his own responsibility, had bored. Out had spurted the oil—away down there in southwest Texas, down in what Peter had called "Tartarus." And now, strangely enough, there was much excitement off here in Starlight at the home of Peter Samuels.

"Why, Peter, we're worth even more now, from Aunt Jemima's barren sections, than we actually *thought* we were worth the day you left the bank."

Then came in Straight, learned the news, expressed due and adequate astonishment, congratulated, scolded, put Peter back to bed.

Next, a strange thing happened. Peter could not talk.

CHAPTER XLI

Judgment, Mercy, and Time to Think

After a few days Peter got back his power of speech. Yet, even so, he did not talk so much as in the old days. But one day he said, "Straight, *am* I going to get well?"

Said Straight, " 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.' "

"You!" cried Peter. "You quoting Scripture!"

"Once upon a time," said the doctor slowly, "once upon a time you, even Peter Samuels, almost did persuade even me to become a Christian."

"I! You! I almost persuaded— I never supposed that— Could there have been a time—"

"Strange as it all seems now. But that was a passing weakness. Let us talk of something else, Peter. You're going to get well."

"And I—"

"Yes. You're going to get well."

"It was something I *did,* Straight. It was not what I *said.* It was not any fault in my apologetic, it was the way I lived. It was I myself, not my argument, that failed."

Straight considered for some time. "Yes, it was you yourself. I take it I am fairly free from personal influences, from the effect of magnetism, if

you want to call it that, but, after all, the speech is never, with any of us, I suppose, quite so great as is the speaker." He looked all round. Patricia was absent. "You're a bad man, Peter—a strong man that has done much good. But you yourself need a thorough conversion.—Take these powders only if you need them." He was gone.

There was something, in those times, black and pall-like hanging over Peter's mind. Straight, each day he came, marvelled that the left arm and leg did not improve more rapidly. The leg was somewhat better, but the arm not at all. Peter had learned by sly indirection that there had been no explosion at the Church Rock quarries, and for this he thanked Heaven a thousand thousand times. He had also learned that Argyronetos, the Greek, whom he had hired to blow the quarry up, had left America for good and all and returned to Greece. He, it was currently told about Starlight, had inherited a small fortune back in Sparta, and now had returned to look after it and to live and die in his native land—to which, it seemed, he was greatly attached. Peter was willing he should stay there.

So Peter had very much to be thankful for, dark as was his soul. Especially he had Patricia. At sight of her, now, love leaped ever higher in him—the old, old love from the well recovered past. He often cried her name, and turned eagerly toward her as she entered the room. And Pat—he easily read her story in her starlit eyes.

He sometimes came to himself with a great start,

as if waking from a dream. This, as a rule, was when Patricia had been in the room for a while and then had spoken to him.

One day he said, "Pat, tell me the truth. Do people know? Do they know—now that all our debts have been paid, and complete restitution accomplished wherever I had done wrong—do they know that I was a bankrupt, even for a little time? Do people generally know—what—what I did with the necklace?"

"They know, Peter."

"Grounch?"

"Grounch. He has told it everywhere. He also helped to ruin you. He plotted with my broker in New York. But not Burley or Sharp, Peter; these were faithful. Do not worry, Peter. You have done so many great and good things, you know. The greatest and best of men do many things small and evil. We must take people as they are."

"Pat," he whispered hoarsely, and much to Pat's astonishment, "I want to die."

Patricia did not argue with him. She just went and took the rapidly whitening head in her arms, just as Peter's Italian, Greek, and Polish mother had probably used to do when he was a little fretful boy. "There, there," she mothered. "Bless his little heart. He's got Pat anyway.

"And Peter, dear, I want to tell you something very important. I loved you wrongly in the old, old days. I made you my god, Peter. Indeed I did, dear. And God has punished me for it. And now

I love God the most—not you. It was right that He should change me. I was only an idolater."

She sobbed a little, poor sentimental Pat. Peter kissed her hand. Then she had strength to go on.

"But now, Peter," she continued, "a very strange thing has happened to me. Though I love God most and put Him above all other things, all other persons and beings, yet, at the same time, my husband, I love you now, yes, ten thousand times more than in the old days. God, because I love Him most, has increased my power of loving. So it ever is, if we are only right with God. All our sacrifices come back to us enormously increased—though often in unexpected ways. If we sacrifice pride and ambition, we get in its place humility—which makes us infinitely happier.

"Peter, when you lay so sick and breathed hard and knew nothing—all those days and days and days and days—I promised God that, if He would only let you live for me to take care of—crippled and helpless though you might be—"

Peter turned his face away, and groaned.

"That I would never be proud or rebellious any more, and that I would never so much as dream of giving my husband the first place in my heart."

"Pat!" cried Peter in a fearful agony. "For heaven's sake go away. I love you dearly, dear, but I can't stand any more of this. I am not worthy— What am I? A worm, a fool. We have money, but all we have is only the result of an accident. Where is all our wisdom?"

"Gone, I hope," returned Pat with an odd little smile. "Gone. Yes, gone, I trust, to the land of Never-come-back, together with our old-time pride and ambition. Let them go. And now, I trust, the money that dear old Aunt Jemima left us will surely be—"

"Invested to the greatest advantage," interrupted Peter, and laughed.

"I would not stoop to have it any other way," smiled Patricia. She arose and went into the kitchen, to prepare for Peter some or another little tiny kickshaw.

It is queer indeed what a difference sickness makes in the "psychology," the mental attitude, of any man or woman. How, for example, to Peter, time lagged now—lagged and lagged! He could hear the old clock ticking—Pat's father's grandfather's clock—there in the great hall—ticking and ticking. How it had hurry-hurried in the old breathless days, the time when so many vast problems had pressed for quick and accurate solution. Peter had time now, at last, to "loaf with God"—only God would not come to him or be companioned with.

As Peter improved somewhat, he was permitted to sit in a wheel-chair by the big front window—the useless left hand hidden away in the breast of his dressing-gown. And there he would watch, hour after hour, the ever-changing aspects of that nature which he had loved so very much better in the days while still he had been able to feel God in it. He loved it still, but with a sad difference. How beau-

tiful it all was! How beautiful and wonderful the Lord had made His world! Sunny day beauty and wonder! Rainy day beauty and wonder! Twilight beauty and wonder! Then the infinite beauty and wonder of the spangled night!

O the great steady stars—as they rose above Church Rock and the roof of the near-by church, at unimaginable distances, but looking ever down and down and down, with, as Peter thought, a sweet, celestial watchfulness and pity over this, the nether Starlight, with all its fickleness, its joys and pains, its struggles and ambition.

Then, the next morning, there were the beauty and the wonder of another day again.

Sometimes the scenes were wonder and beauty suffused with sadness. Sometimes they were wonder and beauty suffused with joy. Sometimes, again, wonder and beauty suffused with mystery, or hope, or abounding cheerfulness and love. But whatsoever the wonder and the beauty might be suffused with, the scene was ever beautiful and ever full of wonder.

One evening, as he sat, or rather lay, in his big chair by the window, the air grew very warm, and he had Pat throw the window open for a time. The Peter Samuels church was all lighted up, and a sweet sound of sacred singing came from its open casements. The song was all about the communion of saints with the Holy Ghost. Presently Dr. Straight came walking down the avenue with bowed head and a deeply worried expression. As he neared the

church, a gleam of hope arose in Peter Samuels. He said to himself (in the whimsical way that sick folk often have) that, if Straight went into the building, he would be converted, but that if he went on by, he would never, in all his life, no matter how many his years should be, give himself to the Lord. How eagerly Peter watched the form of his agnostic friend. As it drew up close to the church door, it nearly stopped, actually hesitated for a moment—then went on.

The sky was black that night, as Peter kept sitting at his window. Not a star was to be seen. In the southeast, ever and again, a glare of heat lightning trembled over the landscape, bringing out the things of earth into a strange, hard distinctness and with, as Peter believed, a strange new meaning. Peter sat long at the window. Pat could hardly get the man to let her put him back to bed.

It was in the very early summer when Peter had fallen sick. Now, later, the sun burned with fiery rays, the breeze blew seldom, the clouds withheld the rain, and the dry dust stifled the nostrils. Before the crops were lost—quite—the rain came, and then came heat again. The wind spoke early of the autumn, while yet the heat was on, whispering about it secretly in little corners and out-of-the-way places—round among the vines, and in the bushes. Even through the glass of his window Peter could hear the whispering.

One fine morning, suddenly, there was frost. Then heat again. After a week or so, frost once more.

The summer had passed completely. Like all the summers that ever had been, it had been filled with wonder and with beauty, but it left, in spite of all its blessings, a feeling of bitterness in Peter Samuels' heart.

Peter, as the fall came on, improved greatly—in body he was quite sure, if not in mind. He could see, now, that Straight had been right about these things. He was clearly going to recover the use of his limbs. And one day he called for an algebra. In the course of the following week, he easily mastered it. His attention, then, was getting strong—clear and quick and very strong indeed. He asked for a Greek Testament, and found that he read it with the old ease. There was no trouble with his memory, then, either.

Pat, one day, asked: "Remember Tony, Pete—Tony Costello, whom you and Burley helped to start in business?"

"I remember."

"He, and the teller whom you saved from the penitentiary, went to Dr. Straight, one day last month, and, believing that you had become totally and permanently insolvent, offered to put up the money that would let you keep on living in this house. They had cash enough to do it with, too."

"God bless them both," exclaimed Peter. "The world is not all bad. And poor little Tony had paid me every cent I had ever lent him, paid it with interest. Pat, did Burley or Toplofty ever say anything to you or to any one as far as you have heard,

about helping us? We couldn't, of course, have expected very much from Burley. But what about Top?"

"Never a word," admitted Pat.

"Just," quoth Peter, "what might have been expected. O well, help me to the window again. It's a crazy world, so far as human beings are concerned. But the out-of-doors—O the beauty and the wonder, the beauty and the wonder, Pat!"

"Yes, dear Peter," Patricia responded, wheeling his chair up close to the window. "Gaze on the beauty and the wonder. They will do you good."

"And not one single hour ever like any other! Not even one minute, one second!"

"It is true. Now I must go to the kitchen." So she went, as she went each day, unwilling that other hands than hers should prepare her lord's meals.

She helped him, moreover, to regain the use of his limbs. Day after day she worked on them, following Straight's directions, rubbing them, pulling the toes and fingers out straight, flexing the forearm, exercising all the muscles. At last he could take a few steps. But the arm recovered more slowly.

He had many visitors, Peter, in those long-lagging days—people, for the more part, whom he had served in some heart-choking capacity. They entered his home like worshippers coming to see a god. And Peter, in his soul, was grieved. He knew that they knew, and that still they worshipped. What a commentary on human nature! How he hated even

the results of his own transcendent power over people.

One day, children came from the slums. This was the most heart-tearing scene he had ever witnessed. To each and every one of these he had given, at its birth, a bank-book with a dollar to the credit of the new Starlight citizen. Only a pitiful advertising scheme! That was all there was of it. Yet these children spoke about the matter as if he, Peter Samuels, the giver of the scant donation, had acted out of liberality alone. A tiny girl with overold and earnest eyes suddenly asked him: "Please, Mr. Samuels, may we not hear you sing?"

Peter did not sing a religious song. He was not at all sure that he could sing anything now, it had been so long since last he had sung. But he did essay a little ditty, a simple, sweet, old-fashioned thing—which had served to amuse children more than a generation ago. His heart was not at all in the proceeding, but he was bitterly curious to see whether his voice had failed. He wondered why he had not tested it before.

And the voice! How it responded! An exquisite harmony, it never does quite expire, does it? I imagine that Peter's words are singing still as they sang that blessed autumn day, in the ears of those little children—singing on and on in their grateful hearts, transmuted ever and again into something golden in their richer, sweeter lives.

The children wept. They could but weep. And some ran out into the yard, unable to endure longer

the poignancy of the wonderful sweet voice. Such are the children of much detested "Southern Europe," chief occupants of the dirty slums in Starlight.

And Peter wept too, but not as the children wept. Not from a rich, deep sympathy with human life and love wept he, but at the hollowness, the sheer echoing emptiness of his own dissatisfied heart. "O God!" he exclaimed to himself, "thou hast forgiven me, I know, for those my many transgressions. Thou hast surely forgiven—so oft I have prayed unto thee. But God! Once again! Once again! O once again, my God! come anigh unto me. I would truly not resist thee now."

He recalled the numerous times when, in the old glad days before his deterioration, the Lord had come to him indeed, and had knocked, knocked again and yet again at his rebellious heart. He recalled in particular the time when he had sat in the railroad yards with his back against the pile of iron rails. And Peter had not let God in, had not let Him in completely. Only a little would he suffer the Lord to enter into his heart. The rest of its chambers he kept for Ambition and the Devil. God and a foul ambition cannot long dwell together, neither God and the Devil, and Peter Samuels, the mystic, knowing this well, had kept in the Devil and his ambition, and had largely kept out God. Even the building of the mammoth church which he had so ardently intended—there had been nothing at all in the project but Ambition and the Devil. Think

of that—the Devil behind a plan to build a church!

And now—Christ knocked at his heart no more. Belief had come anew to him, and easily enough: he had in fact never been really a disbeliever. No man could remain a disbeliever, and see what Peter Samuels saw each day, each night, from his front room window. Some there are who could look upon that wondrous world and remain infidel. But these are the men who merely look, and see not.

Autumn went, just as the summer had gone, and left in Peter Samuels' soul a great bitterness, an unsatisfied longing. "What a man soweth that shall he also reap."

One day Patricia heard Peter speaking by himself. "The devils also believe and tremble." But she did not know the secrets of his innermost heart. She thought he was only bitter still because of his failure, the great financial wreckage of his commercial life. Peter perceived that she so misunderstood him, and was willing enough that she so should misunderstand.

Peter sat by his window and watched the falling, falling of the infinite multitudes of snow-flakes. "What patterns ye make, O uncountable crystals, and ye still more uncountable atoms and electrons as to and fro ye fly throughout unending space and well-nigh unending time! O Pattern-Maker! Pattern-Maker! What is thy pattern? what its final use?" He sometimes mused till he thought that he had perceived at least a little of the pattern, a little of the pattern's meaning.

O the beauty and the wonder of the snow! And the strange suffusion of the storm with what appeared to be a great inward peace! But still Peter's heart was bitter and dissatisfied. There were heights of which he knew, but to which he could not climb; songs which arose in his soul and unto his very lips, but which, even yet, he failed to utter. The miracle had not happened.

"Ah, Pattern-Maker, Pattern-Maker!" he was wont to cry. "Thou shewest me a little of thy glorious design, but thou communest with me no more." So Peter, the born mystic. He knew that his soul was not sufficiently exalted that the Lord, as of old, might knock again, again ask admission to it. Would such exaltation, in his coming days, be again his? He believed not.

So the winter passed, and Peter Samuels, financier and mystic, was still very bitter and dissatisfied. Even because his soul was purer now than it ever had been before, even for that very reason he knew distress and dissatisfaction. What a man soweth, that shall he also reap—and with increase.

As to some other man, there might have been no bitterness, no distress. But, as to Peter Samuels, the situation was inevitable.

CHAPTER XLII

The Mystic Is Waiting Still

The mathematical young preacher visited him one day, and said to him: "You must be very happy, Mr. Samuels, with health partly returning and soon to return completely, also with so very much money to do good things, and such a liberal heart to do them with. We are making a great improvement, a very important addition, in the church, at this very moment, with the last of your gifts—namely, a magnificent collection of theological and mathematical works for the pastor's study. You will pardon me, I know, if I employ an expression which once I heard from your very own lips: 'All is invested to the greatest advantage.'"

Peter said that he hoped that it was, but his manner implied that he thought it wasn't.

The Rev. Mr. Mathematics was terribly shocked. "Can you think of better uses for your money?"

Peter's response was that he believed he could, that almost anybody could—if only, first, his heart was right, was sufficiently exalted to let Christ into it.

A look of grave concern passed over Mr. Mattison's countenance. "I think," said he, "Mr. Samuels, that you have the old-time and very mistaken idea that religion is an emotion, an attitude toward God."

"I have," said Peter simply. "True religion is an emotion, an attitude toward God. It is worship of God."

"But what about morality? and what about sociology—helping people to the good things of *this* world?"

"All that is thoroughly implied in worship," responded Peter. "First get the heart right. Then other things follow. If they do not follow, then the heart was not right."

"The heart! The heart!" cried the reverend young man irritably. "The curse of the present day, my dear sir, is that religion is still too emotional, too much a matter of the heart. And yet you keep talking of the heart. Why, sir, to me religion is like conic sections—a perfectly cold, calm, placid, unimpassioned affair. If Christ were really divine, as we used unthoughtedly to think—"

"Will you please hand me a glass of water?" requested Peter.

The reverend gentleman arose and poured. Peter drank. When he had finished drinking, the reverend gentleman said: "Mr. Samuels, I am always making demands on your bounty. I do so once again. We are wishing to install a fine jazz orchestra in the Samuels church. It will cost a great deal of cash. But think of the good that the jazz will do."

"I am trying to think of it, but somehow fail. Mr. Mattison, I have here the names of many starving and freezing children, over there in Slumtown. A man who secretly works for me, got up the list.

Nine-tenths of charity is simply humbug, but this list can be relied upon absolutely. I will write you a good sized check now." He wrote it. "I want you to take this money to those children in the form of fuel, food and clothing. The immediate necessities in these respects were at once attended to by the man who got up the list. And Dr. Straight has already looked after those little ones in a medical and surgical way."

"But what about conic sections and the jazz?"

"They may wait. We never can quite get round to everything, so, first, attend to the greatest need. Remember, that I have investigated thoroughly, and know exactly what I am doing in this matter."

"You—you—investigated? You investigated charity?"

"I had to, just to find out whether or not it was really charity."

The preacher took the check. "I regret," said he, "that the theological library and the jazz must wait. These things are important. But rest assured, Mr. Samuels, that your money shall be invested exactly as you direct."

"Had I my way," replied Peter, "not one cent of anybody's money would go for swimming pools or for jazz or for theological libraries or for church boxing-matches till all the physical suffering in the world, yes and the spiritual suffering also (so far as possible) had been relieved. And now, Mr. Mattison, I have had a hard day. I beg, therefore, that

you will leave me. But come again, please. Come again."

"I fear," said Mr. Mattison, rising, "that you have been too emotional, Mr. Samuels. Emotions are bad for the human heart. Good-bye."

And Peter was still more bitter and discontented. In spite of the sights and sounds that hinted of returning spring and reawakening flowers, he became more and more discontented. Among other matters he was haunted by the recollection of one of the "red sunsets" which he had seen in Africa. Hundreds and hundreds of people—men, women, children—had been huddled together into a small space, and then—merely because the king of the tribe had perished, and because the beliefs of the tribe demanded that a multitude of other souls should accompany that of the chief on its journey to a final resting-place—all these innocent people had been deliberately slaughtered. The executioner had had just such a round, characterless head, and just such a calm, unimpassioned eye as had had Peter's recent caller. And this remarkable resemblance had set Peter to thinking. It took many deep snows, many beautiful scenes in his wide front yard and in the street, many pleasant callers other than the Rev. Mr. Mathematics to wipe this fearful recollection from his mind. Even then it would return at intervals, again to be banished.

Then Peter did a dreadful thing. In the blackness of his soul he decided that, even if Christ ever should call him again, should come and knock at

his heart and say to him, "Peter Samuels, here am I," even so, he would not let the Lord in. "Better not to know God at all," he shouted, in the hollow chambers of his heart, "than to be tortured like this."

At such times he would shun the window and its outlook on God's world, pull the curtain down in room and hall, and then pace to and fro till his left leg showed signs of exhaustion. Then he would go and lie on the bed, flat of his back, eyes open, hard staring at the bright ceiling. He would not close his eyes, for fear of the things he might then see.

Uncle Henry came at times, in those days, seeking instructions about garden and yard for the fast approaching spring time. Peter had said no more about discharging him, had, in fact, increased his wages twice—even in the middle of the winter, when there was really very little for the old man to do. The wounds that Mistuh Petuh had given him had more than healed. "Wuz jes' gwine be sick, Mistuh Petuh wuz, wuz whut made him so cross en crabbed in dem dere days when he done cut my sal'ry en den 'scharged me." So he explained to himself, and Peter had indeed been "sick."

Peter, on one of Uncle Henry's visits, could but recall what we owe to the negro. "His laughter and song, his unfailing religious sentiment, his patience, his loyalty throughout the long years, the lost generations, the lost centuries of bondage. How had he brightened and cheered not merely his own bare life, but the lives also of the very people that had owned

him, that had shackled and beaten him. God forgive those who have done these things!" cried Peter. "They meant well. And God also bless the negro! God bless in especial thee, old friend, old Uncle Henry, for thy true lessons of patience, and of song, and of joy. Out of the mouths of babes and—black-amoors."

As for Patty, she bustled about the livelong day, helping Peter with things concerning which he no longer needed help, also writing letters to the ill and infirm, sending packages to the poor, assisting all, sustaining all, that came within her influence. Peter could hear her in the church of Sunday mornings and at night, over all the rest of the choir, her sweet soprano storming heaven's gates—for him, he felt, for him. Sometimes he slept, and, awakening, found his head in Patricia's arms.

"Patty," he would say, at such times, "why do you treat me so? I am not displeased, of course, dear. But why—"

"You were moaning, Peter, moaning and groaning terribly about some fearful trouble or unhappiness. So I just took your head in my arms, and, not knowing what it is that Italian mothers sing to their little boys when these are a-sleeping, I just said to you: 'There, there!' Then you did not moan quite so much."

He shook her hand. "Silly!"

In those days Peter heard the voice of the Lord to a dead world, "Come! be resurrected!" The winds crooned and grew happier day by day, hap-

pier and more holy. All was sunshine and early spring green, cheerful flowers everywhere and gardens bright with early promise. Peter Samuels leaned back in his chair, drinking in the wonder, yet also suffering with what he thought inextinguishable pain.

Once, in the night, weary with much thought and very wakeful, he heard a night-bird pipping in a tree. "Cheep, cheep! Go to sleep!" it seemed to say to some younger bird. And Peter tucked his own arm about his own head, and fell tenderly asleep—as if, birdlike, he had tucked his weary brain beneath sleepy wing, and so passed, dreaming.

Later in the night he heard heavy rain, and thought with infinite pity of the birdlets and the parent birds, but caught once more, in a lull, the little "Peep, peep! Sleep, sleep!" and again he himself fell asleep gently.

In the morning he saw and greeted those very birds in the trees. But not in the magnolia. He had thought they must have had their little nest in the magnolia tree. Where now was the magnolia? Patricia, being appealed to, informed him that the magnolia had fallen and so been taken away at some time during his long, long sleep after the stroke. "A fine observer you are, Peter."

CHAPTER XLIII

Marble and Souls

Peter regretted the magnolia, which had stood like a great candlestick, shedding forth light and fragrance out over the public world. But, in the presence of the vernal wonder, his heart was filled nevertheless with gratitude and praise. Miracle after miracle, the spring came on.

One day he was able to walk out as far as the main street. Later, he encircled the house. Once he went to the bank, where Mr. Toplofty was kind enough to tell him that he had not changed at all, but was looking exactly as might have been expected.

But, mostly, Peter went only as far as the garden. There he would sit, looking, listening, drinking in the glories of earth as never he had drunk them in before. Behind his joy and pleasure, though, there was still great bitterness. God, he thought, would not come to him again. Never again could he attain to sufficient elevation of soul. And Peter Samuels, being as he was and what he was, could not do without God.

Then, one day, the miracle happened.

Peter had just gone into the house, and now was seated by the open side-door. He was in a mood of unusual depression, bitterness and almost hate. What did all this world amount to if one had not God? The spring was on full tilt, and old Henry

was working away among the flowers. Peter could see his white woolly head bobbing up and down, up and down. Billows of fragrance rolled in at the door again and again. There were troops of birds in the trees, planning and planning about their nests. "Quite as joyful," thought Peter, "as once was I when planning a great cathedral." Of a sudden he espied a tiny humming-bird, like a delicate spirit from another world, hovering here and there mid shine and shade.

All through the warm, soft minutes, there went a pleasant undertune and wondertune of something, he knew not precisely what, a kind of noise of Nature's secret factories, a pleasant murmuring of wings and leaves and soft stirrings of the rising grass: half heard, ever changing sounds, sweeter by far than man-shapen music, sacreder than mightiest pealings of cathedral organs. The earth was the Lord's instrument now, sending up unimaginable harmonies, to the unobstructed blue of His bright-arched home.

Yet Peter's soul was black, very black. His dream was of men—men, women and little children, far away and beckoning, beckoning. Some of them he beheld running out into the water, still holding up helpless hands, beckoning. "Come to us," they seemed to say. "O come, Peter Samuels. Come."

But Peter, in the dense gloom and funereal desolation of his soul, responded, almost even with his outward lips: "No, I cannot go to you. I cannot go, for the wages of sin is death. Not thy sin, but mine,

O people. The wages of sin is death—not money or power or reputation, but death. Prosperity may linger long enough to enslave, but, in the end, comes death—often a living death (and, at that, whether the arms and legs be paralyzed or not) before the deeper darkness of the grave. I myself had, in fact, been paralyzed in soul for years before I was stricken in body. And now—now— Of what use, O people, could it be if I went to you—I, as I am, without the Holy Spirit?"

Now from amid the rose-bushes, those sublime symbols of love both human and divine, suddenly uprose a cry, the poignant, penetrating melody of old Uncle Henry—

"Tas'de Lord,
Yes, tas' Him,
Tas' Him, tas' Him,
And see how sw-e-e-e-t He is.
O-o-o see how sw-e-e-e-t He is!"

And Peter's heart was exalted by the song. The Lord came and knocked, and Peter let Him in. He said, "Lord God Almighty, here am I." And after a time he said, "Lord, I am wholly thine now: do with me as thou wilt."

And Uncle Henry kept on singing:

"Behine de veil!
Behine de veil!
We live en die behine de veil."

Peter arose and held forth his own two hands. So he stood for a long time. Somewhere within him—

down where the warm, sweet happiness continued, he seemed to hear yet another voice: "O the beauty of saved souls! Beyond the beauty of brick and marble and the bright ringing of expensive bells—the beauty of saved souls!"

Peter responded, "Yes, dear Lord, the beauty of saved souls. The beauty of saved souls!"

Then, while he stood, still with his arms stretched straight forth before him, reaching and still reaching for imaginary folk, it all came over him that Uncle Henry it truly was that had made this great thing possible—had worked this miracle. And the simple, blessed instrument had been merely the bit of song which Henry had constructed from the words which Peter himself had taught him so many years ago. "What a man soweth," cried Peter, "that shall he also reap. Sow ambition and you receive perhaps bodily diseases, or (much more surely and much worse) spiritual death. Sow the words of the spirit, and, in its season—the transfiguration it shall come to you."

Peter turned with a feeling that his year of invalidism had not been lost. It had been in fact the greatest of all his years—a year of judgment and mercy, of deep spiritual humiliation and much time to think. Chancing to look over toward the old church, Peter observed Mr. Burley gazing on that structure with arms akimbo and with enraptured eyes.

Peter called softly for Pat, but she did not come. So he looked in the hall for her, then in her bed-

room, at last in her little study. There she sat by the west window, waiting for the sunset. She, too, was lost in contemplation, just as he himself had been but a moment before.

The sunset light came slowly, melting, as it were a baptism of blood, in a crimson outpour over all her soft, white, abundant hair and her old, very prematurely old and folded hands. Her face was like the delicate substance of a long forgotten dream—out of space, out of time, and deeply illuminated with more than the external, more than the mere sunset's, glory.

Peter's heart was suddenly quite broken. He had not noticed before that Patricia was getting so old. He himself, no doubt, was beginning to look old also. No matter about that. He must see, too, concerning the Master's work while yet there was time and strength to do it in. "Let us all hasten," he cried aloud, and Patricia looked up.

And Patricia saw the transfiguration in his eyes—all his love for the Son of God, all his deep and abiding affection for the sons of God, all his earnest love and pity for the sons and daughters of earth and heaven since first the "sons of the morning" sang together and praised Him continually. She had been lost in deep thoughts of heaven. Now she could think and feel about earth again. She experienced indeed volcanic emotions, the shock of seas, the rocking of stars. There were gales of fire in her spirit, and they consumed her not, but made her stronger. She knew now why many in primitive

churches, losing control of themselves, had shouted aloud at the conversion of some loved one, long thought lost.

She did not herself shout. The hand of convention was much too strong upon her. She went up to her husband though, and kissed him.

He said, "Mr. William Burley is over in front of the church. Let us go and speak with him. He keeps looking this way, as if he might be wishing that we would come."

He picked her up in his two strong arms, and held her aloft. "There is not any difference in them now," said he.

They took each other by the hands, and went, bareheaded, down their own private walk, past the place where the old magnolia tree had stood for so many years but now was standing no more, and so on to Church Street, then across it to the church.

"Been a-thinkin'," said Burley, as they joined him. "Been a-thinkin' an' a-thinkin'. Glad your debts is paid, both of you, but surely you ain't got much left. [He had never learned the full truth about Peter's and Patricia's financial recuperation.] I'm also glad that *I* ain't busted. An' now I'll tell you what I'm gonna do.

"A long time ago—you've forgot it, Pete, but *I* ain't—never did forget no good that nobody ever done me. A long time ago, in the panic—that's before we got to be such enemies—you saved my business goose. Then you done me other favors. Most of all, if it hadn't 'a' been for you, I wouldn't never

have come into the church. Yore preachin' done it, Pete. An' now I'm gonna make it all back to you.

"I got *lots* o' money, Pete—partly thanks to you. An' now I'm gonna build the kind o' church that *you* wanted to build. Look at it now there, if you got any imagination.

"Why there she stands, Pete—a whole mountain o' gleamin' snow. Ain't she a beaut? Cost millions an' millions o' dollars. How many people, do you suppose, could 'a' built such a church? Hardly none.

"Look at that wing yander—that's the gymnasium. An' there, still bigger, is the room for the movie shows. The place for the big dinners is over there—lark pies maybe. There's basket ball and nine pins and roller-skatin' places. An' back yander, behind all the rest of the institution, is two big swimmin' pools—one fer boys an' one fer girls. Million dollars each, Peter. Pete and Pat, a million dollars each. An' each of the girls is to have her own seventy-five dollar individual electric hair-dryer. Ef them there swimmin' pools an' hair-dryers don't bring dozens o' souls to Christ—then there ain't no use a-tryin' further.

"An' say, Pete, what do you suppose? Just inside the church, in the vestibule, there's goin' to be a brass tablet, a big one. And on the tablet it'll say, 'Built in such and such a year by two friends in Jesus: William Burley and Peter Samuels.' What do you think o' *that,* Sammy? Half the honor'll be yourn, and still it'll never cost you a cent.—What's that soun'?"

There came from across the street the sweet syllables—

"Behine de veil!
Behine de veil!
Let's tas' de Lord behine de veil!"

Peter was deeply touched by his friend's devotion to him. He felt, too, that it was well enough that William Burley should build the church. There were things that William never could understand. He must do what he could. Nevertheless, Peter was more than humble about his own spiritual capacities, especially about his own spiritual record already made. He said, with a soft light in either eye: "William, do you know about the necklace? Am I worthy? Do *you* know what I did with it, the necklace?"

"Hang the necklace!" cried Burley. "I done worse than that many a time. So've all the other men in Starlight. I'm gonna build an expensive cathedral, an' you're gonna preach in it. That's the point."

"Build your great cathedral, then," said Peter. "But, William, do not dedicate it unto any mere man. Give it altogether to Christ. Meantime, thanks and a heartfelt blessing, my old-time friend." He shook hands with him cordially.

Then Peter, in that strange, striking way which he had, and which was simply a natural part of him, turned and looked steadily into the southeast. The stars were coming out, looking, as Peter thought,

down to the lower Starlight with a fond, angelic expectation. Low on the horizon was a slaty cloud with fitful flashes of heat-lightning in it—tracing, as Peter figured, in hieroglyphics of fire, the wishes of God toward men.

Peter watched it for a very long time, Peter of the war-worn face and the hero of many unnecessary battles. Here, in that face, was the gash of one great sin, there the deep, dark seam of another. Yet, through it all, and over and above it all, the bright day-beam of love intensely shining. Mars and Mercury in the fine, gentle countenance, but dead, dead; and both there together with the present and ever-living Christ.

Still Peter stood at gaze.

"Your name's Peter," said Burley. " 'And upon this rock—' "

Peter took a little step forward. Then another. Then another still.

"Pete," cried William, in an agony. "What do you mean, standin' there all the time like that, then a-steppin' away from me?"

"Europe and America," said Peter, "you have had your chance at Christ. But Africa, poor Africa! What have we ever done for you?"

"Where you goin', Pete?"

Peter did not turn round, and Burley, even had Peter turned, could never have understood the wondrous light in his eyes. Peter called back to him, to poor Burley, who never could have understood—"To Africa."

Then Pat stepped gaily to her husband's side, and took his strong left arm.

"You too, Miss Samuels?" cried Burley. "You goin' to leave us?"

Patricia brightly nodded.

Still Burley could not altogether comprehend. "Why, *where* you goin'?"

Patricia laughed, and even stooped to repeat the explanation of her husband, yes his very syllables: "To Africa."

THE END

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